

140+ RECORDINGS REVIEWED Martha Argerich ~ John Eliot Gardiner ~ Thomas Quasthoff

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May highlights

from EMI and Virgin Classics



Spotlight release



Beethoven: Piano Sonatas

Ingrid Fliter

Following her critically acclaimed Chopin recordings for EMI Classics, the exciting young Argentinian pianist turns her attention to three of the most passionate and powerful Beethoven sonatas with titles to match: Op.13 *Pathétique*, Op. 31 No. 2 *Tempest* and Op. 57 *Appassionata*. Ingrid Fliter makes her first appearance in the International Piano Series on 7 June with an all-Beethoven recital at London's Southbank Centre.

"These are beautifully conceived performances, full of crisp, original detail, and sparkingly articulated."

The Guardian on Chopin: Complete Waltzes

Also new this month



Handel: Ariodante

Alan Curtis, Joyce DiDonato

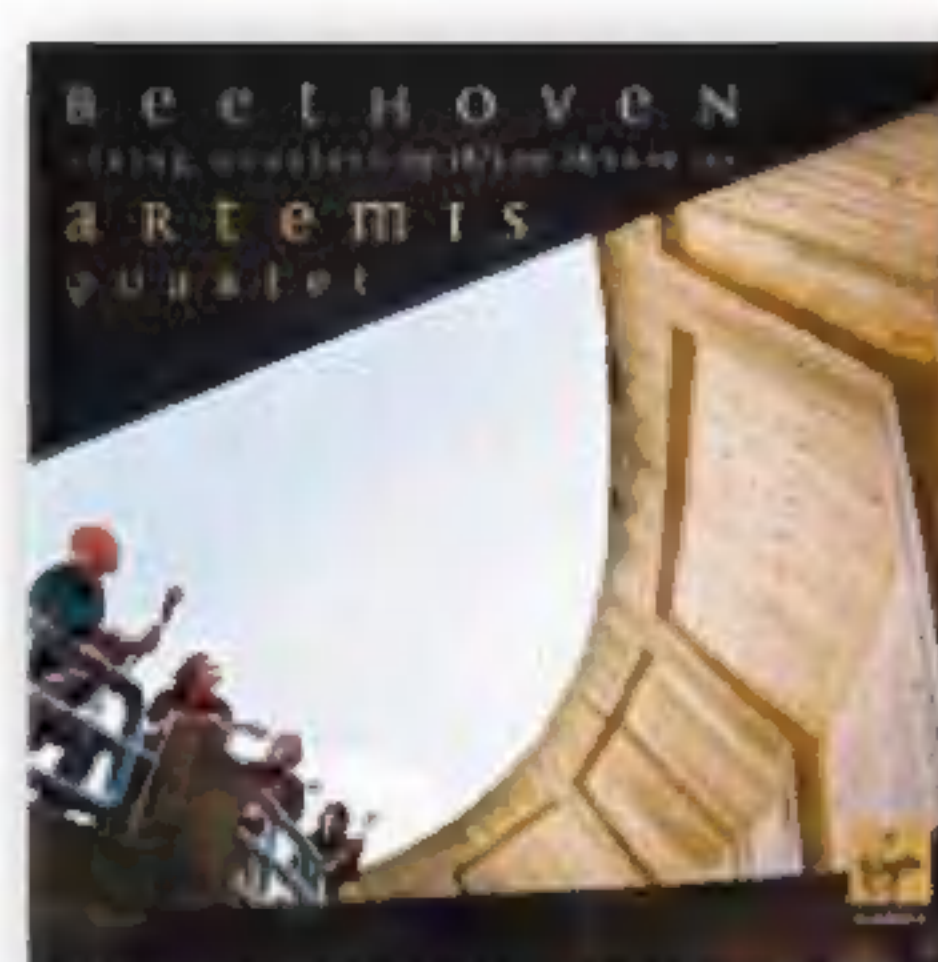
This complete recording features the renowned Handelian conductor, "one of the great scholar-musicians of recent times" (*The New York Times*), leading his ensemble Il Complesso Barocco with Joyce DiDonato in the title role.



Bach: Goldberg Variations

Nicholas Angelich

"A formidable player whose performances are of a wholly exceptional drama, sweep and impeccable craftsmanship" (*Gramophone*) adds a landmark of the Baroque keyboard repertoire to his distinguished Virgin Classics discography.



Beethoven: String Quartets

Artemis Quartet

The Artemis Quartet rounds off its Beethoven cycle for Virgin Classics with two early quartets and the composer's last completed quartet. The complete cycle is due for release as a box set in July 2011.



The Sound of Martha Argerich

Martha Argerich

Four titles celebrate a 'living legend' whose dazzling virtuosity, insight and mystery make her a pianist of unrivalled fascination. Recorded between 1965-2009, these discs present Martha Argerich in solo works, concertos and chamber collaborations.



Mahler: Complete Symphonies

Klaus Tennstedt

Marking the centenary of Mahler's death and what would have been the year of Tennstedt's 85th birthday, EMI Classics presents a 16 CD box set of the conductor's complete Mahler recordings with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.



EMI Classics – Home of Opera

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GRAMOPHONE

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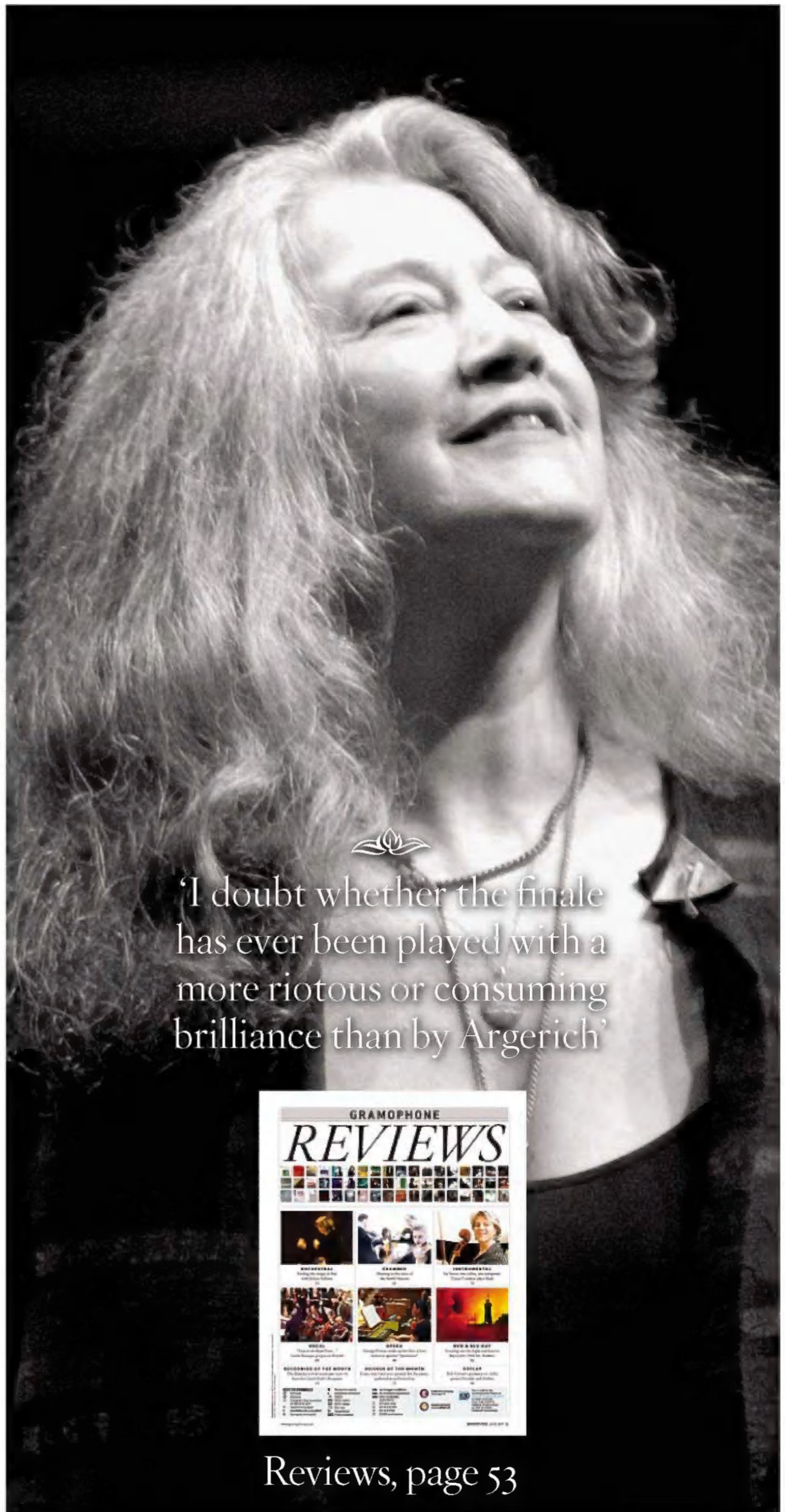
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MEET MROBRECHT

Despite being the king of Masses in the 15th century, Jacob Obrecht is less well known today. Fabrice Fitch discusses his work and recommends the finest recordings

FOCUSING ON FOLK

Finally, writes Andrew Mellor, Czech folk music is being taken seriously, with musicians applying the same period-instrument techniques they've long applied to classical



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALIX LAVEAU/EMI CLASSICS

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GAETANO DONIZETTI

MARIA STUARDA

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Recorded at Teatro La Fenice,
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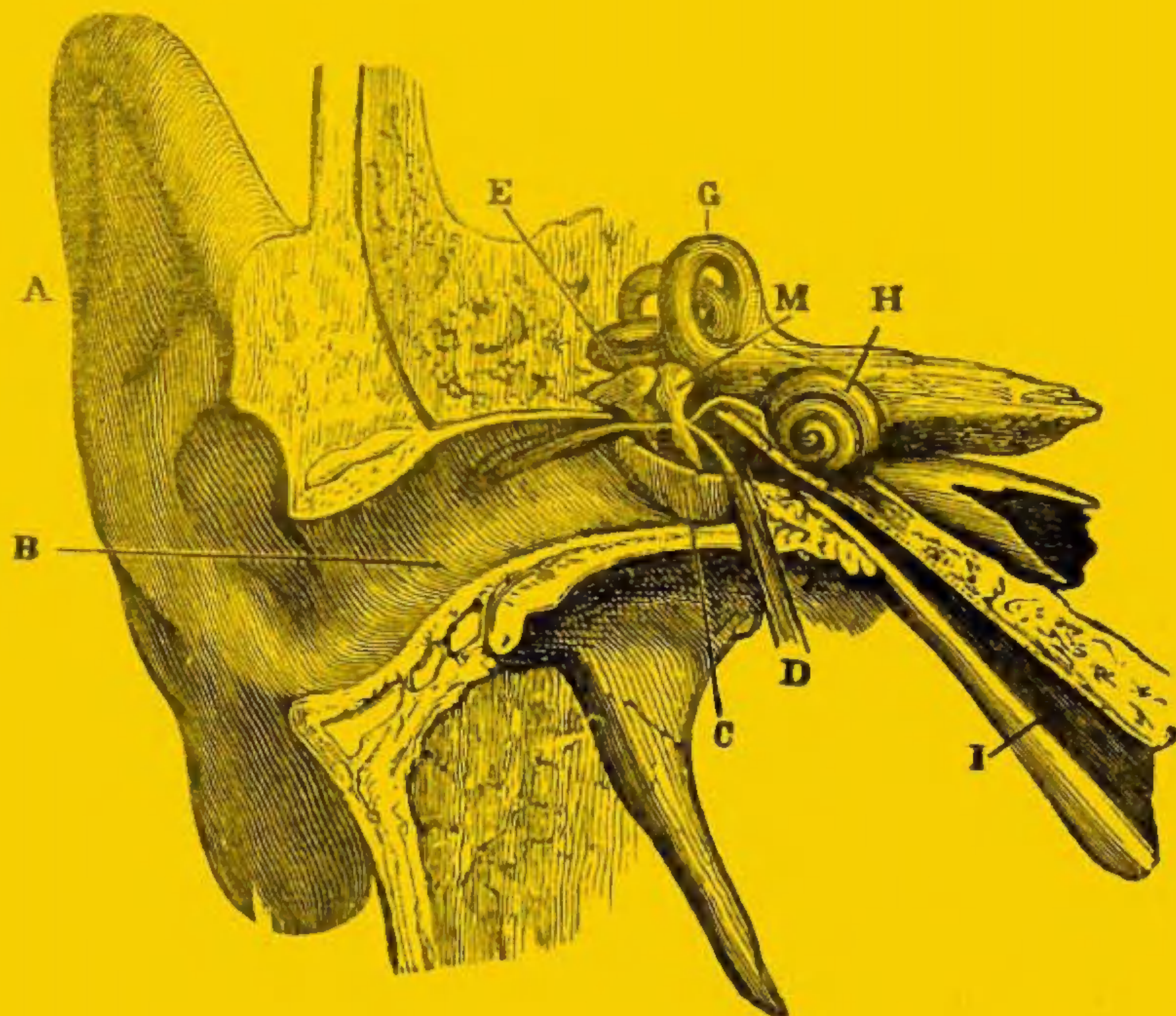
**EDITOR'S
CHOICE**

"An outstanding release"
Gramophone

This production from Venice's beautiful Teatro La Fenice shows Queen Mary and her embittered foe Elizabeth both as prisoners for the same man, trapped in a labyrinth that is the central set element in Denis Krief's modern staging



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sound wave: a wave that propagates sound; the study of the physical properties of sound

Communication within the body is electrochemical. For example, when the ear picks up sound waves, it changes them to electrical impulses or messages. These electrical impulses then move from the neurons (in the ear) along an axon to your synapse. This impulse or *message* crosses over the space to the synapse by a chemical *movement* to the next dendrite and continues moving electrically to the next neuron. This process is repeated billions of times over and over along the neurological system until the message reaches its destination. Given all that effort, we believe the end result should be exquisite; which is why we make sure we put in at least as much work as your body to ensure your listening *experience* is pleasurable.

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Our Contributors



Editor-in-chief **JAMES JOLLY** had been impressed by Yannick Nézet-Séguin so "the chance to drop in on a rehearsal to talk to him for *Gramophone* was not to be declined". The result? An honest, very revealing interview.



CHRISTOPHER MALTMAN's career as a leading baritone started in 1997 when he won the Lieder prize at the Cardiff Singer of the World contest. As this issue's diarist, he struggles with the dilemmas of the recording process.



Music writer **CHARLOTTE GARDNER** spent three years as a newshound for the BBC's flagship current affairs programme, *Today*. In this issue she investigates the dearth of young female conductors.

Our Reviewers

Andrew Achenbach
Nalen Anthoni
Mike Ashman
Philip Clark
Rob Cowan*
Justin Davidson
Jeremy Dibble
Peter Dickinson
Jed Distler
Duncan Druce
Adrian Edwards
Richard Fairman
David Fallows
David Fanning
Iain Fenlon
Fabrice Fitch
Jonathan Freeman-Attwood
Edward Greenfield
David Gutman
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Ivan Moody
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Stephen Plaistow
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Guy Rickards
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Richard Whitehouse
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Richard Wigmore
William Yeoman

*Contributing editor

EDITORIAL

GRAMOPHONE

Founded in 1923 by Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone as 'an organ of candid opinion for the numerous possessors of gramophones'

Naming the new star conductors



Scarcely a month goes by without some orchestra, record label or PR person announcing the coming of the new great young conductor. And, to be fair to them, it's very rare that they're flogging a dead horse – there is so much young talent around these days and our musical lives are the better for it. But there is a world of difference between the prodigious young talent and the developing visionary who will one day become one of the greats, helping to shape all our cultural tastes.

It is hard to tell who will mature in what way. But *Gramophone* has quite a track record in these things (for proof, just look back at the youngsters we named "Tomorrow's classical superstars" in the August 2006 issue). So, casting all the unholy powers of market hype aside, we took a long, hard look at the conducting prodigies staking their claims and in this issue we name 10 under the age of 40 who we believe are here to stay. Expect all of them to be running major orchestras and opera houses before too

'The biggest emerging star of the younger generation gives an open and fascinating account of what it is to be a young maestro today'

long. Oh, and before you ask, you won't find Gustavo Dudamel in our list, being so far advanced already it hardly seemed appropriate (there is a Dudamel protégé though – which, I know, seems unlikely given that Dudamel himself is still only 30!). You will find the biggest emerging star of that generation, as Yannick Nézet-Séguin gives an open and fascinating account of what it is to be a young maestro today.

The death of our longtime vocal reviewer John Steane is sad indeed. Like many readers of *Gramophone*, I was brought up on his erudite and instantly memorable descriptions in this magazine of his favourite (and less favoured) singers. Although *Gramophone's* tradition of great writing about music is alive and well, John's unique style will be much missed. Shortly after I became editor, he asked me if he might write a piece comparing a recent Daniel Barenboim lecture to a similar speech by Benjamin Britten. I hesitated, not greatly enthused, before consenting. The article was riveting and I told him that next time he should remind me that I was giving him dispensation to write whatever he wanted. He'd be the last one to say so, but John usually knew best.

James Jolly





Notes & Letters

John Steane remembered • Whither concert overtures? • Disreputable record covers

John Steane

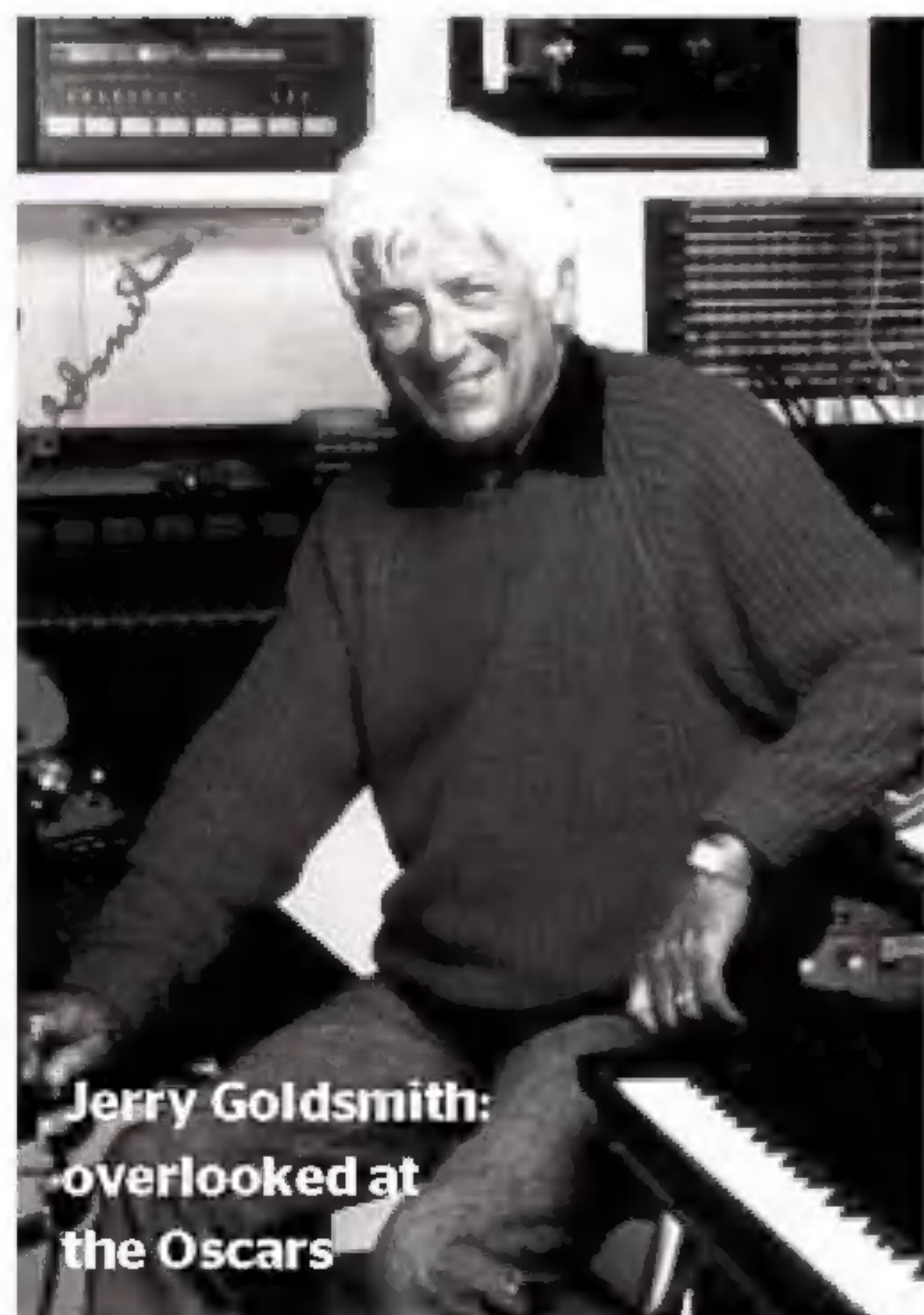
My wife and I are very sad to learn of the death of John Steane (Obituary, page 12). We knew of his illness and had been speaking to him about two weeks ago. We had often corresponded with John before we created the Bradford on Avon Recorded Music Society in 2001 and he offered to come from his home in Coventry "if you are ever short of a speaker". Needless to say, we immediately accepted his kind offer and every year since then John has been a regular and welcome visitor, presenting many fine programmes.

This morning I spoke about John's passing to our good friend, the fine bass-baritone Raimund Herinx, who has been a superb supporter of our society and has presented programmes since its inception. In expressing his regrets, Raimund praised John for his unrivalled knowledge of singers and singing and said he would be "a great loss to our profession".

As a friend and excellent speaker we will certainly miss John's presentation due in April and I have no doubt that all readers of *Gramophone* will miss his enlightened comments.

Ken and Grace Donnelly

Bradford on Avon, Wilts, UK



Jerry Goldsmith:
overlooked at
the Oscars

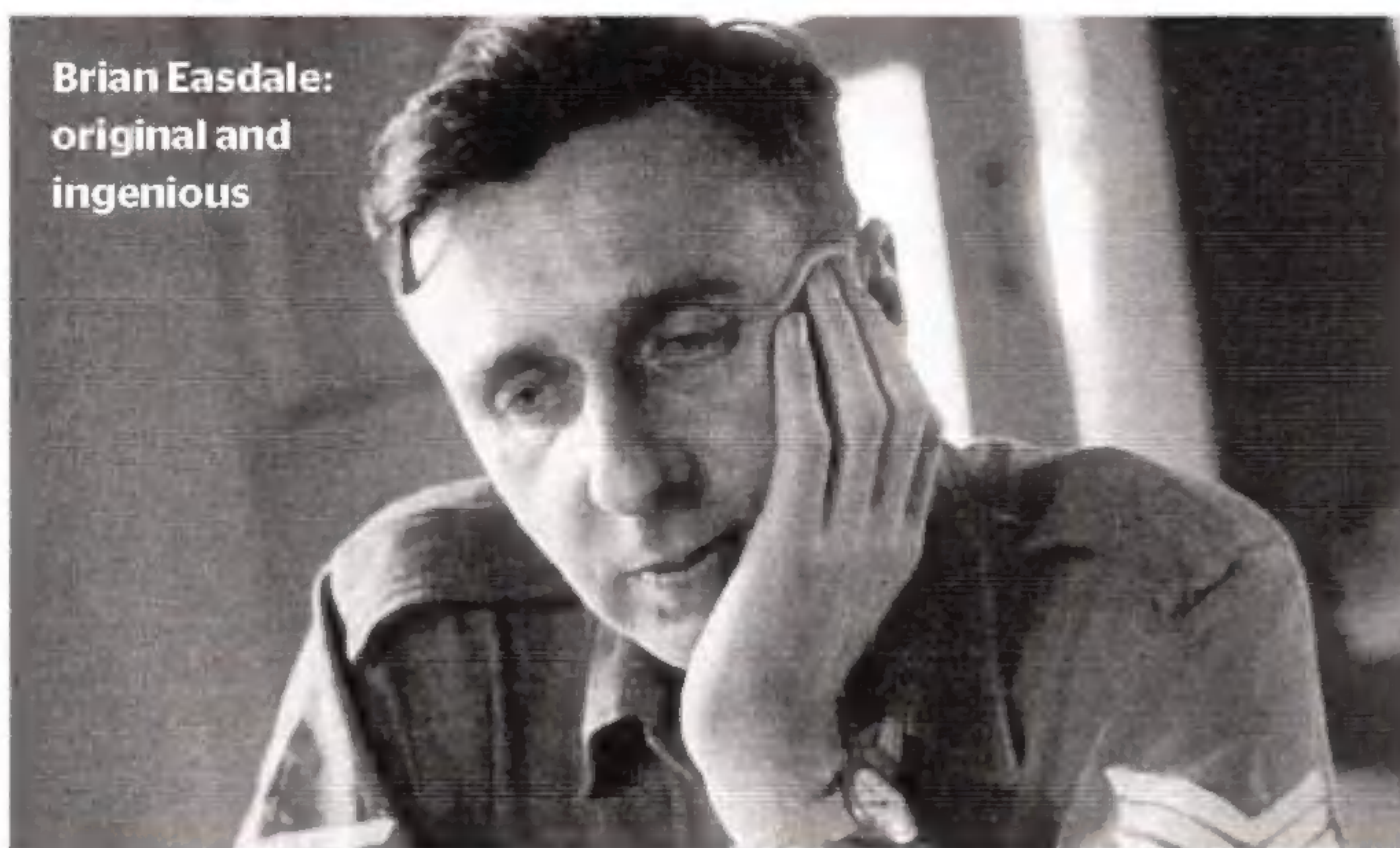
LETTER OF THE MONTH

An Elgarian borrowing

I was delighted to see that the recent CD of Brian Easdale's film music had received the honour of your Editor's Choice (May, page 79). Adrian Edwards's review gave much pleasure to those, like myself, who still seek out the surviving small amount of his other music, such as that written for opera and choirs. What is left to us deserves to be recorded. Some of it is superb, none is mundane.

The haunting *Red Shoes* theme is, in fact, lifted straight from Elgar's *Cockaigne*. But the *Red Shoes* music is no worse for this, because Easdale goes on to develop original and ingenious variations, using rhythmic accents and orchestrations which are beautifully evocative of the style of music typically written for ballet by mid-20th-century composers, which is, of course, exactly what the film demands. Not only does it make for attractive music but it is eminently danceable and exactly interprets the progress of the story of the ballet with great skill.

Easdale knew his job and did it superlatively. His ability to match the pulse and mood of the music precisely to what is happening on the screen is only matched, in my view, by Walton's *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue* for *The First of the Few* – ballet music for the air.
Peter Lloyd, S Yorks, UK



Brian Easdale:
original and
ingenious

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will find it one of the most user-friendly classical music sites on the internet. The letter of the month receives £50 of Presto Classical gift vouchers. Please send letters for publication in the July issue by May 6.

**PRESTO
CLASSICAL**

Cinema gold

Thank you for the many pages devoted to film music (April). I was surprised that so little was made of the enormously talented Jerry Goldsmith, to my mind the finest film composer of all. OK, he won just one Academy Award,

for *The Omen*, but that, I believe, was due to his abrasive persona and not his talent. He was nominated 10 times up until 1983. Funny that!

I had the privilege of attending both his concerts with the LSO in London in 2003 and

I remember him turning to the audience and asking how many "Trekkies" were there. There was a huge response from over half the packed Barbican. Goldsmith said: "OK, can you all come backstage later and explain to me what it all means, because I only write the music."

John Grant

Oamaru, New Zealand, UK

Hit and Miss missed

Among the myriad well-merited accolades contained in James Inverne's comprehensive tribute to John Barry (April, page 34), there's one omission: reference to *Hit and Miss*, the theme music Barry composed in 1959 for the BBC's *Juke Box Jury* television programme. This vignette, with its unlikely combination of Hank Marvin twanging guitar and Tchaikovskian *pizzicato*, not only captures a perfect snapshot of Sixties culture but also provides an early illustration of the idiomatic synthesis from which was forged such a glittering career.

Barry Borman

via e-mail

Specific overtures

Am I the only person concerned that the concert overture, for so long a staple of the concert programme, is quickly becoming a part of the repertoire that can only be experienced on record? A trawl through concert listings in national newspapers shows that orchestras are increasingly dispensing with this "curtain raiser" and going straight into the concerto.

There are many once-popular works that I have yet to experience in the concert hall. Chausson's *Poème* for violin and orchestra, Saint-Saëns's *Havanaise* and Dvořák's *Silent Woods* are all pieces that have

eluded me in concert despite being popular on disc. What a shame that so much wonderful music is being neglected.

Robert Roy
W Lothian, UK

Vile Voříšek

I greatly enjoyed your "Record Covers from Hell" (May, page 32). Also glad to see that this rare art is alive and well, as displayed in the unintended supplement on the following page 36, where at least three of the ECM New Series covers uphold the tradition. You may also enjoy the enclosed sample from my collection (below) – music by Voříšek. The record sleeve encloses a four-page catalogue of almost equally ill-advised designs...
Michael Friend
via e-mail



Like pulling teeth? Music by Voříšek inspires a 'cover from hell'

Beastly Britten

...To my joy I managed to find this much cherished little number on the net (*Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* – below). Surely this has to qualify for some sort of award. Even as a 10-year-old I recall being appalled...

William Johnston
Brighton, UK



Another, ahem, winner: Britten and Saint-Saëns from Columbia

A Beecham misfire

I was delighted by the news that Beecham's performance of Schubert's "Great C major" was being issued (March, page 34) as that work has always been a great favourite. I was even more pleased when I became aware of the complimentary remarks of Rob Cowan.

I collect Beecham issues but I don't think I have ever been as disappointed with a Beecham performance as in this Schubert symphony. Although it was a public performance – and they usually display the conductor at his best – this one comes over to my ears as totally lacking in charm and must have seemed to Sir Thomas to be a symphony justifying a solid and heavy treatment, lacking in ethereal delight, in contrast to his performances of earlier Schubert symphonies.

I am no musicologist and am perfectly prepared to acknowledge that the fault may lie with me but I shall turn, for full enjoyment in that work, to Claudio Abbado's recording with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, which has great charm and sparkle. I shall undoubtedly keep my Beecham version, not only for "completeness" but for the wonderful performance of the Delius who, on the same disc in his *Summer Garden*, sounds absolutely other-worldly.

Clive Mackie
E Sussex, UK



Sir Thomas Beecham: solid in Schubert

OBITUARY



YAKOV KREIZBERG Conductor

Born October 24, 1959;

Died March 15, 2011

Born in Leningrad, Yakov Kreizberg was the brother of conductor Semyon Bychkov. He studied at Tanglewood with Gustav Meier, Seiji Ozawa, Leonard Bernstein and Erich Leinsdorf, as well as at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute. From 1994 to 2001 he was general music director of the Komische Oper in Berlin and, from 1995 to 2000, principal conductor of the Bournemouth SO.

At the time of his death, Kreizberg was chief conductor and artistic advisor of the Netherlands Philharmonic and Netherlands Chamber orchestras, music director and artistic director of the Monte-Carlo PO and principal guest conductor of the Vienna SO.

Yakov "Yascha" Kreizberg was more to us than a great conductor. He was our dearest friend. We are both young artists and were younger still when we first met Yascha (we indeed met him on the same day, October 27, 2003, in Philadelphia), but he had a wonderful way of both guiding us and at the same time respecting us as equal colleagues, despite our youth.

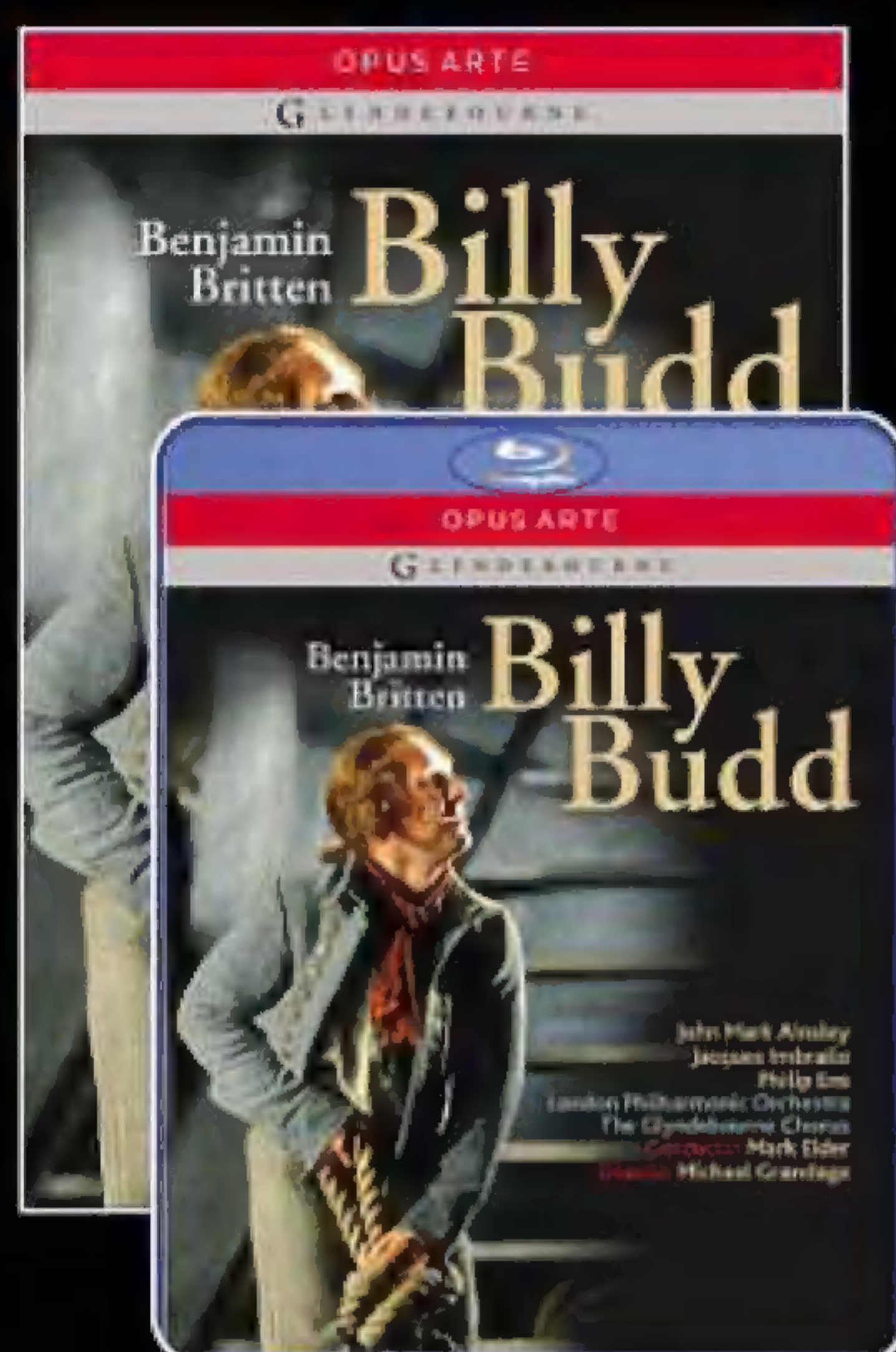
He had a brilliant mind, always knowing exactly what he wanted, as much

in life as in music. His natural authority gave him the right and privilege to conduct the greatest orchestras of our time, always being amazingly clear both in his conducting and in his explanations about music. Onstage he was so emotional and so "in the music" itself that it could become scary. He gave absolutely everything and demanded the same from his orchestras and his soloists. We have played countless concerts and recorded a number of CDs with him – never once did we see him with his thoughts, or heart, somewhere else. He loved music more than anything else in the world but, more importantly, he needed music more than anything else in the world.

He conducted as long as he could move his arms. Despite his illness, which took away every ounce of energy from this most energetic man, he gave everything onstage until his last concert, which took place on February 14 this year in Amsterdam. His memory will remain with us as our friend, our idol and one of the greatest conductors we have come to know. We will forever be grateful for his guidance, his friendship, for every concert we were able to play with him and every moment we spent together.

Julia Fischer and
Daniel Müller-Schott

NEW RELEASES



BRITTEN *Billy Budd* Glyndebourne

Glyndebourne has a proud association with the operas of Benjamin Britten. The all-male opera with a libretto co-written by EM Forster, is based on the battle between pure good and blind evil, set on a British man-o-war ship.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



VERDI *La Traviata* Royal Opera House

Verdi's best-loved work, is performed here by a star cast including Renée Fleming, Thomas Hampson and Joseph Calleja. Antonio Pappano conducts the revival of Richard Eyre's highly acclaimed production.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



WAGNER *Die Walküre* Bayreuth Festival

Christian Thielemann, "by common consent the leading Wagner conductor of our time" (Die Presse), returns to Bayreuth for this radiant account of *Die Walküre* filmed at the 2010 Festival.

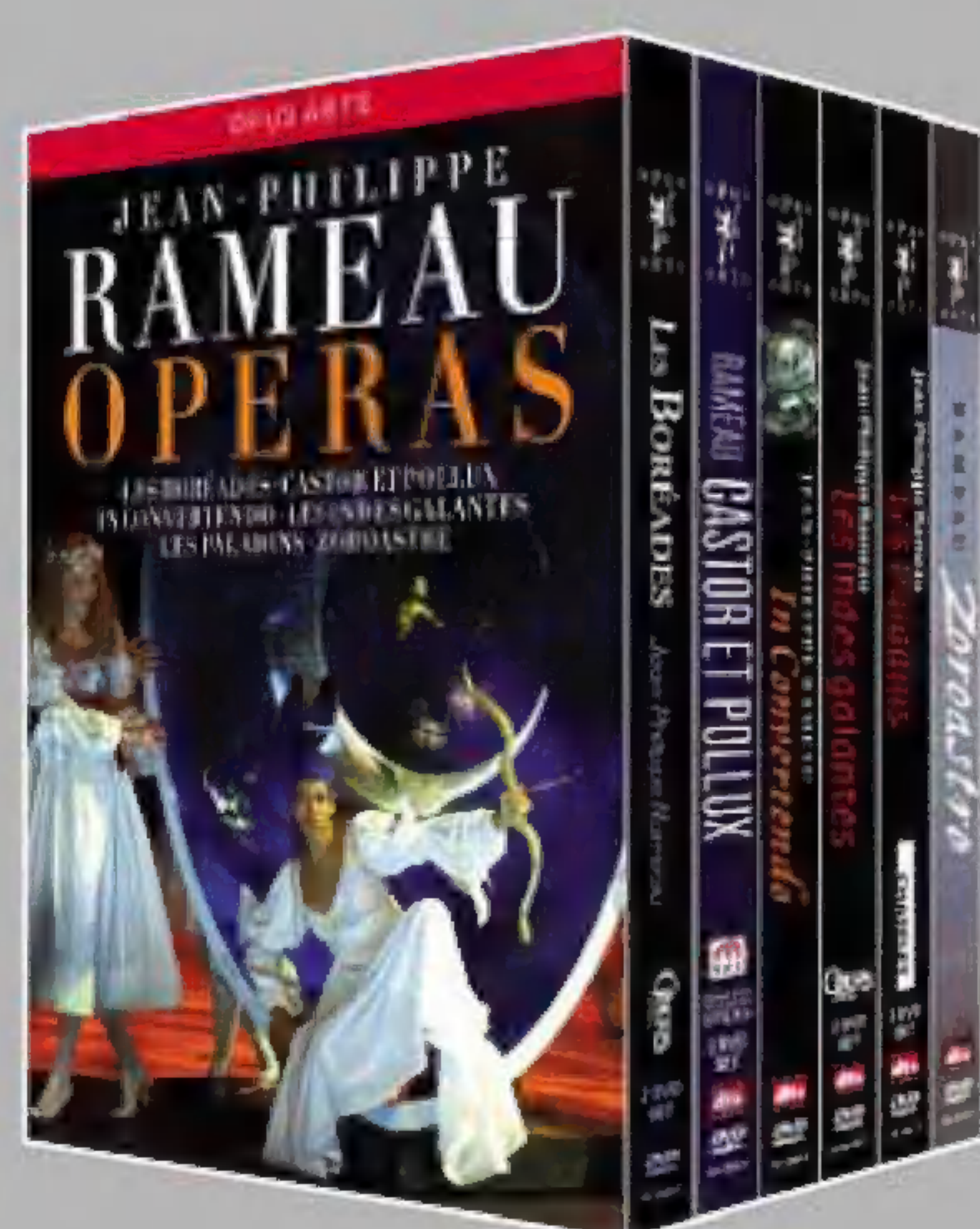
AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



WAGNER *Der fliegende Holländer* De Nederlandse Opera

Austrian director Martin Kušej's pioneering vision brings a challenging and provoking insight to Wagner's opera of love and redemption, with his singular ability to connect characters and their actions to the score.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



RAMEAU *The Operas*

This collection of five operas, and a rarely performed grand motet, offers a glimpse into the magnificent output of one of the leading French composers of the Baroque era.

11 DVD BOX SET



MOZART *Così fan tutte*

Mozart specialist Colin Davis directs an exceptional recording of this witty, sophisticated, compact comic opera. The superlative cast includes a stellar performance from Kiri Te Kanawa.

3 CD SET



STRAUSS *Der Rosenkavalier*

Strauss's opera mixes comedy and philosophy with farce and romance. Exceptional singing from Anna Tomowa-Sintow and Kurt Moll, with the Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House conducted by Andrew Davis.

3 CD SET

Robert Tear

Tenor **John Mark Ainsley** pays tribute to his friend and hero



ROBERT TEAR

Tenor

Born March 8, 1939;

Died March 29, 2011

For tenors of my generation, Robert Tear had the voice that rang in our ears. Bob came to the attention of the public very early, straight after his time at King's College, Cambridge. His prominence on stage and in the recording studio quickly followed, so he was on many of the records that I bought as an aspiring tenor.

I, and many of my colleagues, admired him. He was the tenor we all wanted to be when we grew up. There was something emotionally frank about his singing, at once very fine and yet vigorous. The cliché of the willowy British never-louder-than-lovely tenor did not apply to him. His sound was open, muscular and fantastically exciting, but applied with intelligence and poetry. It came straight from the solar plexus. Though filled with colour and intelligence, he knew when the music needed the high-octane approach.

Born in Glamorgan, his opera debut was as Benjamin Britten's Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* in 1963, and he was closely associated with Britten and Peter Pears during his early career. However, he experienced the famous Britten *froideur* when he opted to create the role of Dov in Michael Tippett's *The Knot Garden* at the expense of further involvement with the Aldeburgh Festival, inevitably in Pears's shadow. Tear had begun to develop his own musical identity and no longer had so much in common with Pears's singing. Listening to his early recordings, one can detect the flattery of imitation but, as he grew in confidence, he found his own voice.

Spanning some five decades, his career was so long that the latest memories many have of him are in cameo roles, his last being the Emperor in Puccini's *Turandot* at the Royal Opera House in 2009. But he was one of Europe's most famous Loges in Wagner's *Ring*, a role he sang in numerous productions (and recorded with Wolfgang Sawallisch), and he was very much in demand as the painter in Berg's *Lulu* (which he recorded for Pierre Boulez) and in all the heroic Mozart roles. He sang Lensky for Sir Georg Solti in *Eugene Onegin* at Covent Garden. Major roles in operas by composers from Handel to Henze followed and took him to the world's great opera houses.

The breadth of recorded repertoire is simply titanic, from lute songs with Julian Bream right through to a famous recording of


Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. There were memorable partnerships with baritone Benjamin Luxon and soprano Valerie Masterson. The Britten roles remained important, with his Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* for Glyndebourne a high-water mark in his career. He sang Grimes, and Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*. But his repertoire was the broadest of all British tenors.

Bob and I first worked together in Munich on Handel's *Saul*. This was some 10 years ago and was when I really got to know him well. He was singing the Witch of Endor, a role that occupies the stage relatively briefly, yet he found so much in it. Every night the wings of the stage were filled by his colleagues watching with admiration. But like all truly interesting singers, his artistic personality was made up of more than just singing. He painted watercolours and he also wrote poetry, as well as two published books about singing. One day in Munich, I went to his dressing room and he read me a wonderful sonnet he had written that afternoon. I was struck by its depth and beauty, and that moment remains a fond memory.

All of this informed who he was as a singer. Colleagues whom he taught often mention how he'd talk to them about certain books or paintings and how these might influence an approach to the music. It wasn't a matter of some new technique, it was fundamental to who he was. He was fascinated by the connection between all art forms.

But Bob would have scoffed at the idea of being described as a cerebral singer, and was the first to puncture any pomposity. One young singer announced to him his ambition to be the best bass in the world. Bob looked at him with a twinkle and said, "That's marvellous, but how will you know?". A wise and typically mischievous response.

His wisdom was given generously and subtly. Whenever I bumped into him he would walk up to me singing a tiny theme from a role he knew I had coming up. This would be his way of opening a conversation in which ideas could be exchanged and advice given. He was also a great one for not taking things too seriously, not least by hitching up his fake bosoms in *Saul* when he knew the audience couldn't see but I could. His sense of naughtiness was never far away.

Towards the end he admitted to finding singing physically exhausting. But for close to half a century, anyone listening to him couldn't help but notice the infectious pleasure he took in turning sound into music. He is sincerely missed. 

John Steane

One of the great vocal reviewers is remembered by **James Jolly**



JOHN STEANE

Music critic

Born April 12, 1928;

Died March 17, 2011

When I took it on I don't believe that it was ever suggested to me that part of my purpose should be to 'deal very critically', any more than when starting as a reviewer I was instructed to err, if at all, 'on the side of kindness'. In both instances I assumed (and I'm sure rightly) that what was wanted was an honest opinion arrived at after conscientious and sensitive listening. (John Steane in 1999 on writing his "Quarterly Retrospect" column.)

John Steane's classic book on the voice, *The Grand Tradition*, was published in 1974. Its title acknowledges the continuum of the vocal art, each generation blending into the next, singers falling easily into different schools. But the Grand Tradition might equally be employed to described *Gramophone's* continuing heritage of great writing on the voice, a tradition that has embraced Herman Klein, Desmond Shawe-Taylor, Alan Blyth, Patrick O'Connor and John himself.

John, or JBS as he was known to generations of *Gramophone* readers, was the authority on singing with, perhaps even more important, a uniquely expressive turn of phrase and feel for tradition. As Graham Johnson so elegantly put it in the introduction to a collection of JBS's columns, "his writing, like the palimpsest of the Anglo-Saxon chronicler, takes account of new events in the context of the old: parchment in praise of shellac is embellished, after much deliberation, with accounts of more recent victories on vinyl and plastic."

It was JBS's beautifully observed and straightforwardly expressed views on the art of singing that brought him to the attention of the EMI record producer Walter Legge, who suggested that John would be a useful adornment to *Gramophone's* panel of contributors. JBS wrote for us from 1973 until his death, not just individual reviews of new or reissued recordings but also a "Quarterly Retrospect" (subtitled "The Gramophone and the Voice"), which offered a second opinion on recordings initially reviewed by his colleagues. His last contribution ran last month, a typically engaging defence of the Gobbi/Callas *Barbiere di Siviglia*, in "The Trial" series ("Sometimes the vibrations would flatten out," he wrote of Tito Gobbi, "but the savour was never lost for long, always he was Gobbi and once you had caught a love for the voice it was not something you would drop for a coarsened note or two." Quintessential JBS – bang on, personal and beautifully expressed.)

Born in Coventry, JBS read English at Jesus College, Cambridge. Graduating in 1952, he joined the teaching staff of Merchant Taylors' School in Northwood, Middlesex: he was to remain there for his entire working life, serving as housemaster of Walter House (and, quite by chance, numbered a future editor of *Gramophone*, Christopher Pollard, among his charges). He also played the organ for

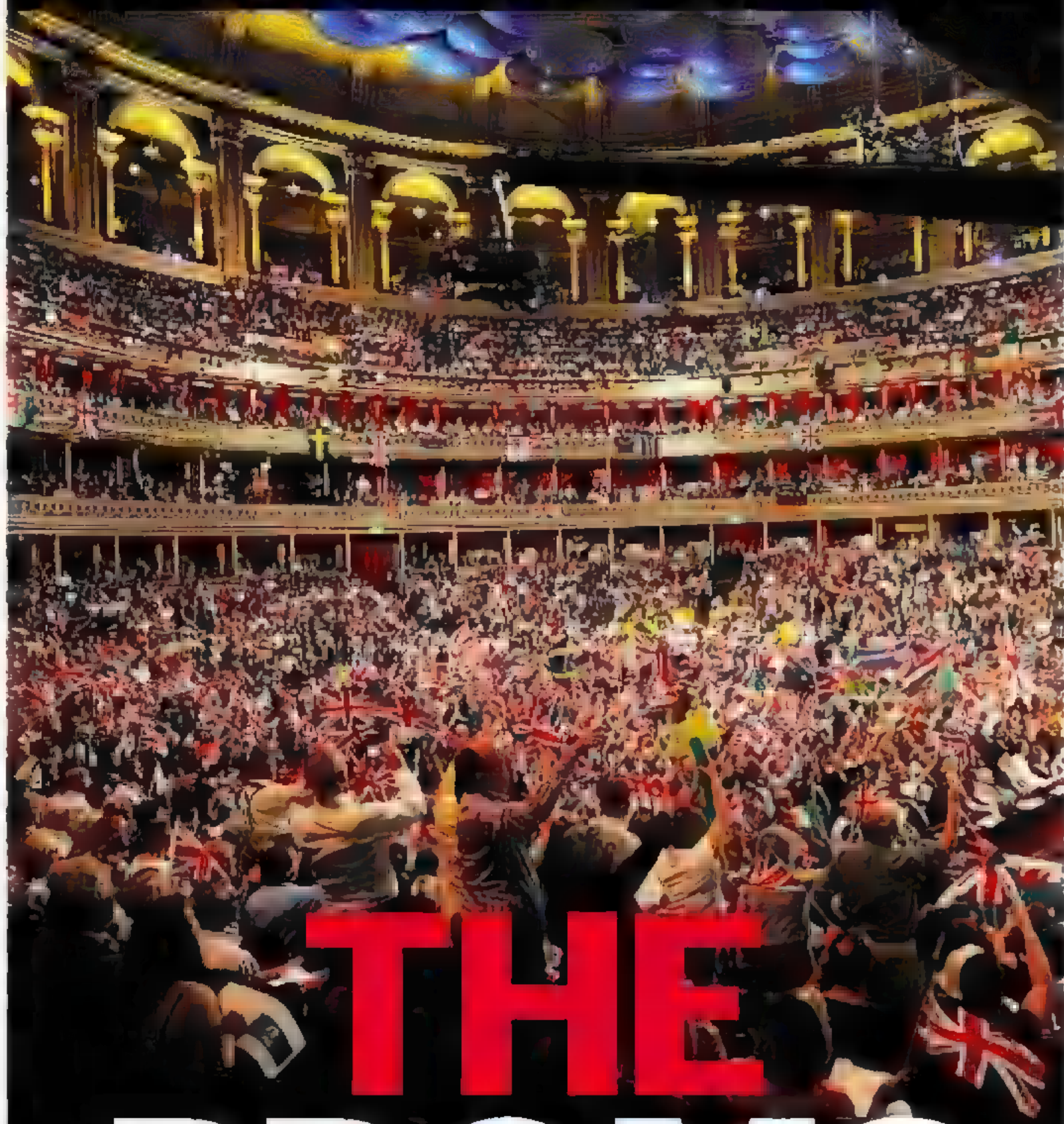
chapel services (choral music, and particularly the music of the Anglican liturgy, was one of his great loves). Throughout his life he was an enthusiastic presence at Covent Garden and Wigmore Hall.

John was a great admirer of the work of the playwright Christopher Marlowe and he published a critical study of the dramas in 1964, as well as providing the introduction to the Penguin collection of Marlowe's plays. But the voice was his principal love and his beautifully observed views about the art of singing found outlets not only in *Gramophone* and *Opera Now* (to which he also contributed for many years), but also in a number of books including *The Grand Tradition: Seventy Years of Singing on Record, 1900-1970* (1974), *Voices, Singers and Critics* (1992), *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf: A Career on Record* (with Alan Sanders, 1995), the three-volume *Singers of the Century* (1996-2000) and, most recently, a privately published memoir (2010). Twenty-five years of his "Quarterly Retrospects" were gathered together and published by *Gramophone* as *The Gramophone and the Voice* (1999).

He was very fair, always taking into account what the singer was trying to do before delivering his opinion. And he was not reluctant to defend singers for whom his critic colleagues would reach for easy critical platitudes. JBS could never subscribe, for example, to the school of opinion that Schwarzkopf's singing was "mannered". For him she was a singer passionately intent on conveying both the words and the music ("Affectation means insincerity, and insincerity is betrayed by lack of care or sensitivity towards the supposed object of attention; and as one tests Schwarzkopf at any point it is to find her deeply sensitive to all that is going on in the music, such as orchestral harmonies and colours of which more often than not singers show no signs of being aware at all.") John was not easily drawn on naming favourites but, if pressed, it would have been the tenor Giovanni Martinelli, a signed photograph of whom adorned the wall of his dining room in Coventry and who looked down approvingly on countless well-irrigated and hugely enjoyable lunches and dinners. ●

COMING NEXT MONTH

GRAMOPHONE



THE PROMS ISSUE

guest-edited by
????

As is now *Gramophone* tradition, our annual issue devoted to the biggest music festival in the world is guest-edited by a leading Proms musician. The past three years have seen fascinating editorial choices made by Nicola Benedetti, Stephen Hough and Hélène Grimaud and this year will prove equally intriguing. As ever, our guest editor will interview his (yes, his) Proms hero. An event issue, for the event of the year.

ON SALE MAY 31

PHOTOGRAPHY: BEN STANSALL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

BRUCKNER MOTETS



Choir Of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh,
RSAMD Brass, Duncan Ferguson *director*
DCD34071

Following their highly acclaimed recording of the 16th-century John Taverner, Duncan Ferguson and his Edinburgh choir turn their attention to one of the nineteenth century's compositional giants. This sequence of motets – among them several little-known gems – is a testament to Bruckner's profound Catholic faith and these performances blaze with fire and fervour in the vast cathedral's icy acoustic.

'The richness and depth ... that gleaming treble line, a mixture of boys and girls, sounding utterly fearless. The sound of those voices shimmering in the cathedral acoustic in such a fine recording, stayed with me for ages.'

— Andrew Ainsworth, *CD Review*, 10 January 2010, BBC Radio 3

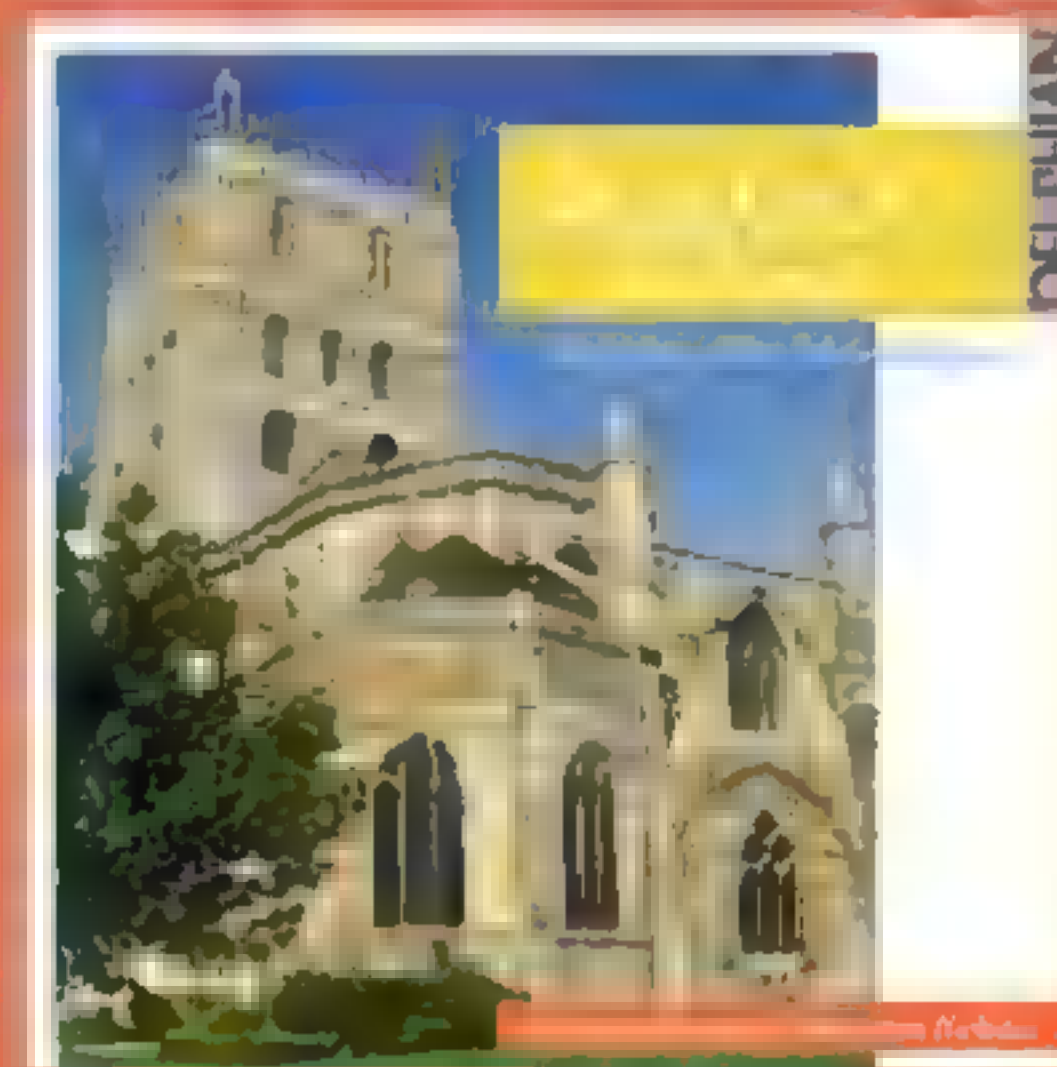


Alexander's Feast

George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759)
Ludus Baroque, Richard Neville-Towle *conductor*
Sophie Bevan *soprano*—Ed Lyon *tenor*—
William Berger *bass* DCD34094

Twice a year some of the UK's finest baroque players and young vocal soloists come together in Edinburgh's Canongate Kirk to give sell-out concerts of the great works of Bach and Handel. Ludus Baroque's appearances are unmissable events in Edinburgh's calendar. Now for the first time listeners from further afield can experience the vibrancy of their Festival-fuelled performances in this their debut recording. Alexander's Feast is the perfect showpiece for the vitality and abandon of Ludus Baroque and their rising-star soloists.

'Richard Neville-Towle gathers some of Britain's best new talents on this recording – Sophie Bevan, Ed Lyon and William Berger are on dazzling form and there is some superb singing from the chorus.' — *The Guardian*



Stanford Choral Music

Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum,
Carleton Etherington *organ*, Benjamin Nicholas *director*
DCD34087

For their fourth recording for Delphian, the boys and men of Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum turn their attentions to that doyen of Anglican church music, Charles Villiers Stanford. Alongside familiar gems from the Evensong repertoire, sung with characteristic vigour and freshness, the programme includes the six little-known Bible Songs, each followed by its associated hymn. Laurence Kilsby, 2009 BBC Chorister of the Year, makes his solo debut on disc.

'The men's voices are also powerful and resonant and the total effect is rich and forthright.'
— *Gramophone*, April 2009



Carleton Etherington

Carleton Etherington Plays the Grove & Milton
Organs of Tewkesbury Abbey
DCD34089

Few ecclesiastical buildings in the United Kingdom can boast possessing two pipe organs; of those that can, fewer still can rival the quality of the instruments in Tewkesbury's magnificent Norman abbey. This recording demonstrates the unique qualities of each instrument in a programme of concert organ works by some of the finest composers for the organ of the past two centuries.

'The tewkesbury organist, carleton etherington, shows sensitivity and subtlety...'
— *International Record Review*, March 2009

DELPHIAN

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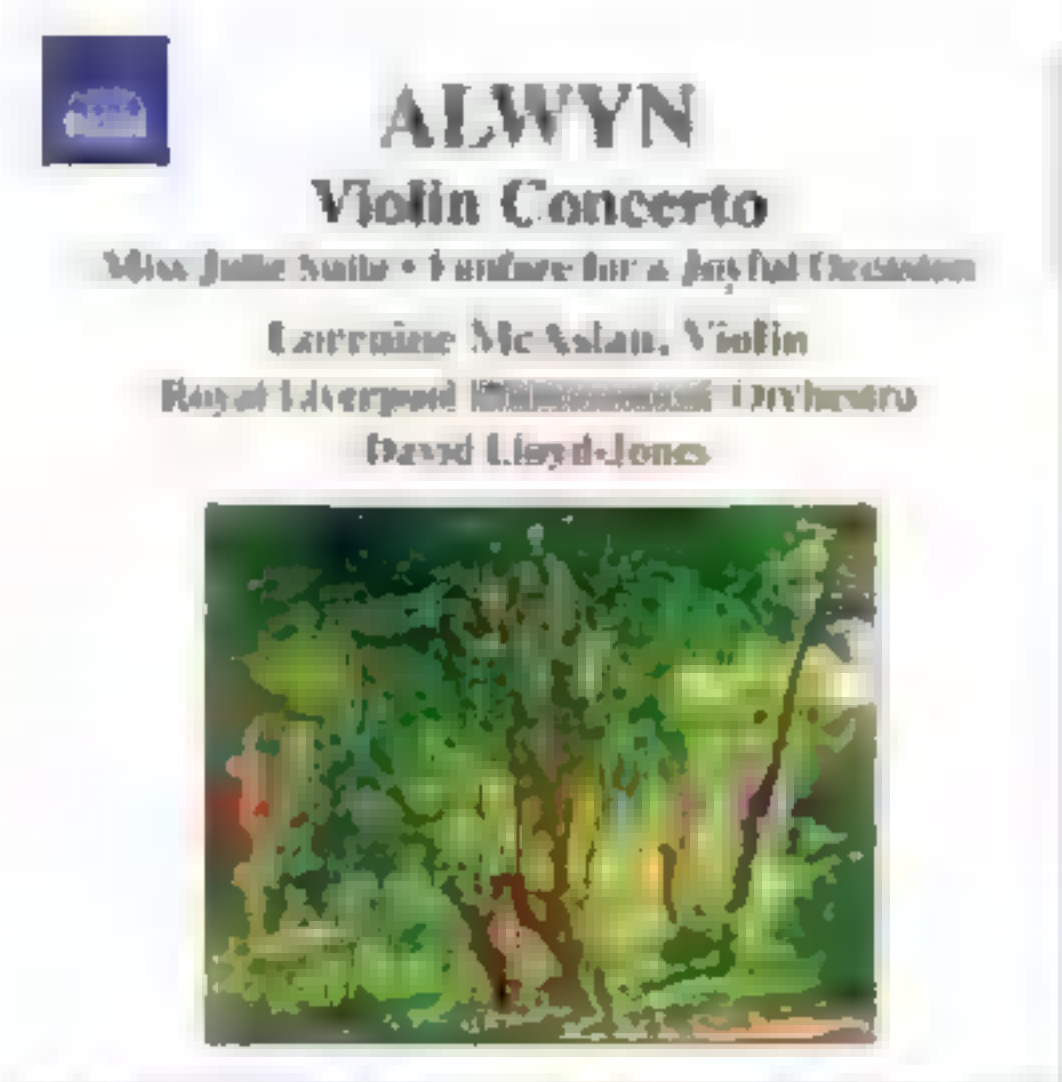
allegro
CLASSICAL

Editor's Choice

James Inverne's pick of this month's outstanding new discs – hear excerpts online



If you're minded to investigate further this issue's list of young conductors to watch, you can start at our online *Gramophone* Player – where you can hear several of the new batch in action. As ever, extended excerpts from the Editor's Choice selection are also there to stream (and of course buy, if you like what you hear), as are highlights from some of the recommended recordings of Bach's works for solo violin, as chosen by Duncan Druce in *The Gramophone Collection*. And our monthly trawling of the archives yields a complete recording of more works by Bach, conducted by the young Nikolaus Harnoncourt (pictured). It's all there for you to enjoy at www.gramophone.co.uk



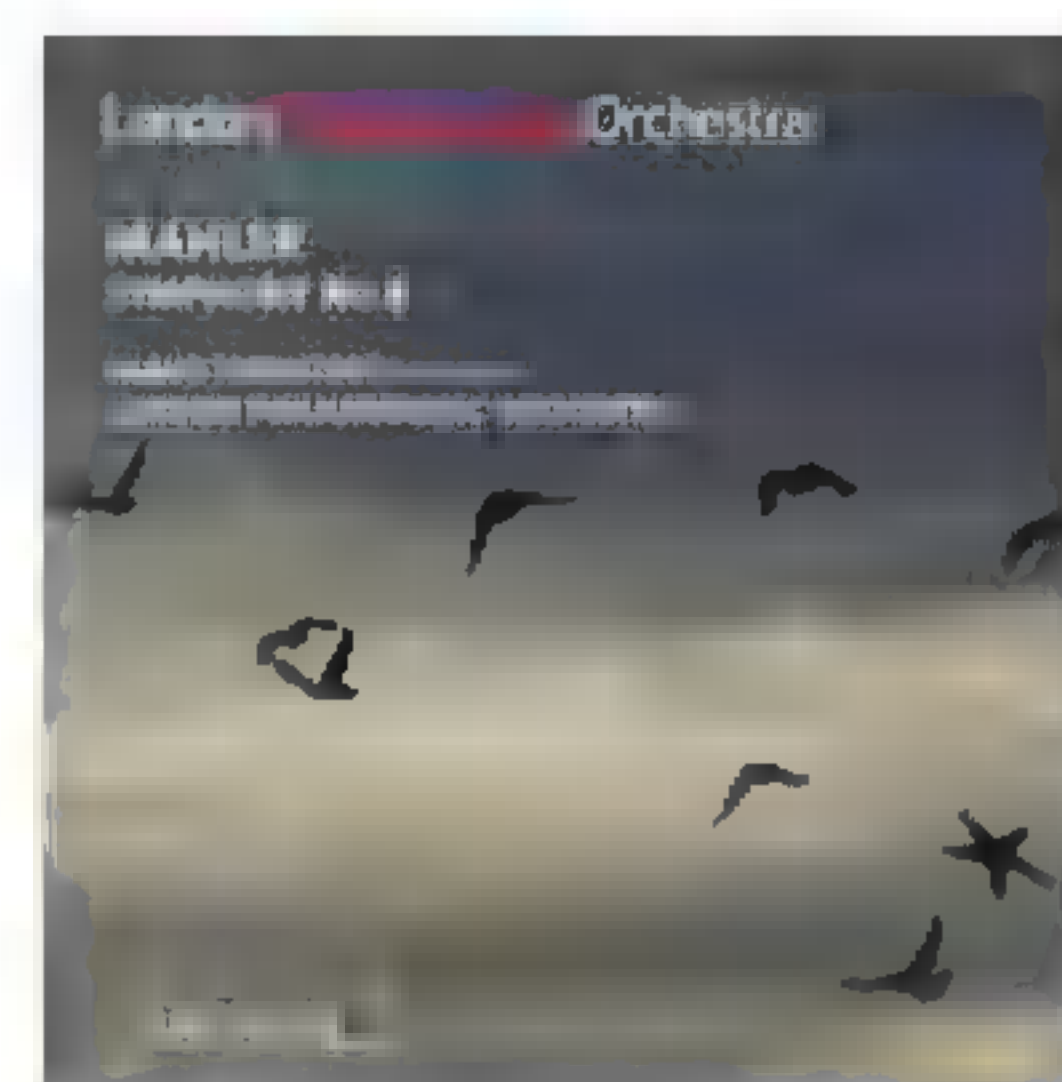
ALWYN
Violin Concerto, etc
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / David Lloyd-Jones
Naxos
Having never heard Alwyn's opera of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, I can't comment on how representative the suite that appears on this recording is – but it's certainly a compelling work in its own right. Here it's coupled with the little-known Violin Concerto in fine performances from David Lloyd-Jones and eloquent violinist Lorraine McAslan. Music to explore.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**



CPE BACH
Six Harpsichord Concertos
Andreas Staier hpd Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Petra Mülleians
Harmonia Mundi
On paper, this is self-recommending. As our reviewer Lindsay Kemp notes, CPE Bach is fast gaining in popularity, and to have the great Freiburg players team up with harpsichord king Andreas Staier, what's not to like? Nothing, it turns out, and there's plenty to marvel at. The energy and excitement of the whole thing loudly proclaims a recording event.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**



GRIEG
Piano Concerto.
Lyric Pieces
Sigurd Slåttbrekk, Edvard Grieg pfs Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / Michail Jurowski
Simax
If one sets out to recreate the abundance of character in Grieg's own playing and the tradition it spawned, there's nothing like going to the source. So (the marvellous) Sigurd Slåttbrekk goes to Grieg's Trolldhaugen villa to play the composer's own piano. The new recordings are placed against Grieg's own in a fascinating set.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 57**



MAHLER
Symphony No 8
London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Klaus Tennstedt
LPO
Even in this age of Mahlerian ubiquity, recordings of the Eighth Symphony are pretty thin on the ground, no doubt because of the enormous forces needed to mount a performance. Tennstedt's studio recording with the London Phil has for my money long been the finest account available, so to have this live version – so concentrated, living on its nerves – is a gift.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 59**

Reissue of the month



LISZT
The Complete Piano Music
Leslie Howard pf
Hyperion
It may be churlish to say, though it may equally be true, that Leslie Howard might not be your Liszt pianist of choice for

individual works in this composer's prodigious output. It is certainly true that no other pianist has done Liszt anything like the same kind of service.

If you want a complete Liszt set, you simply have to have this one. Its like does not exist; and such is Howard's scholarship and the cogency of his approach that this is not simply another big project, it is a world in itself. The packaging is as user-friendly as can be.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**

DVD & Blu-ray of the month



MAHLER
Symphony No 9
Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado
Accentus
I have said before that

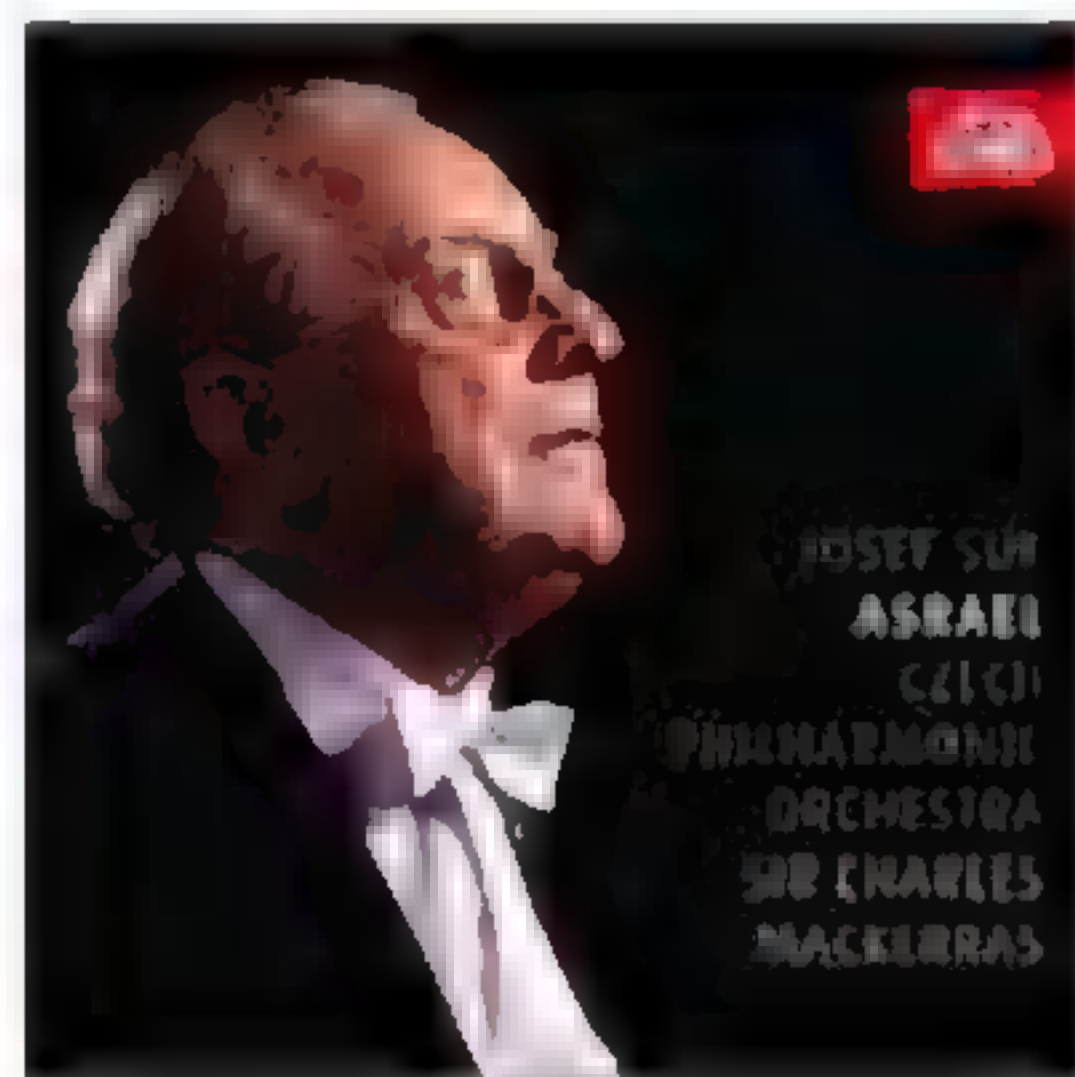
Abbado's Mahler isn't always to my taste (having sometimes found it too polished, too assured for the requisite sense of danger, even madness kept barely at bay). But then, I have also often followed that with, "This set, on the other hand..." So I suppose I should now drop the caveats and join the legions of his admirers in this music. Certainly what he lacks in roughness is more than compensated for with deep profundity.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**

Collegium 1704 in Zelenka:

'You feel the urgency, upheaval, sorrow and even disorientation that Zelenka and the mourners must have experienced'



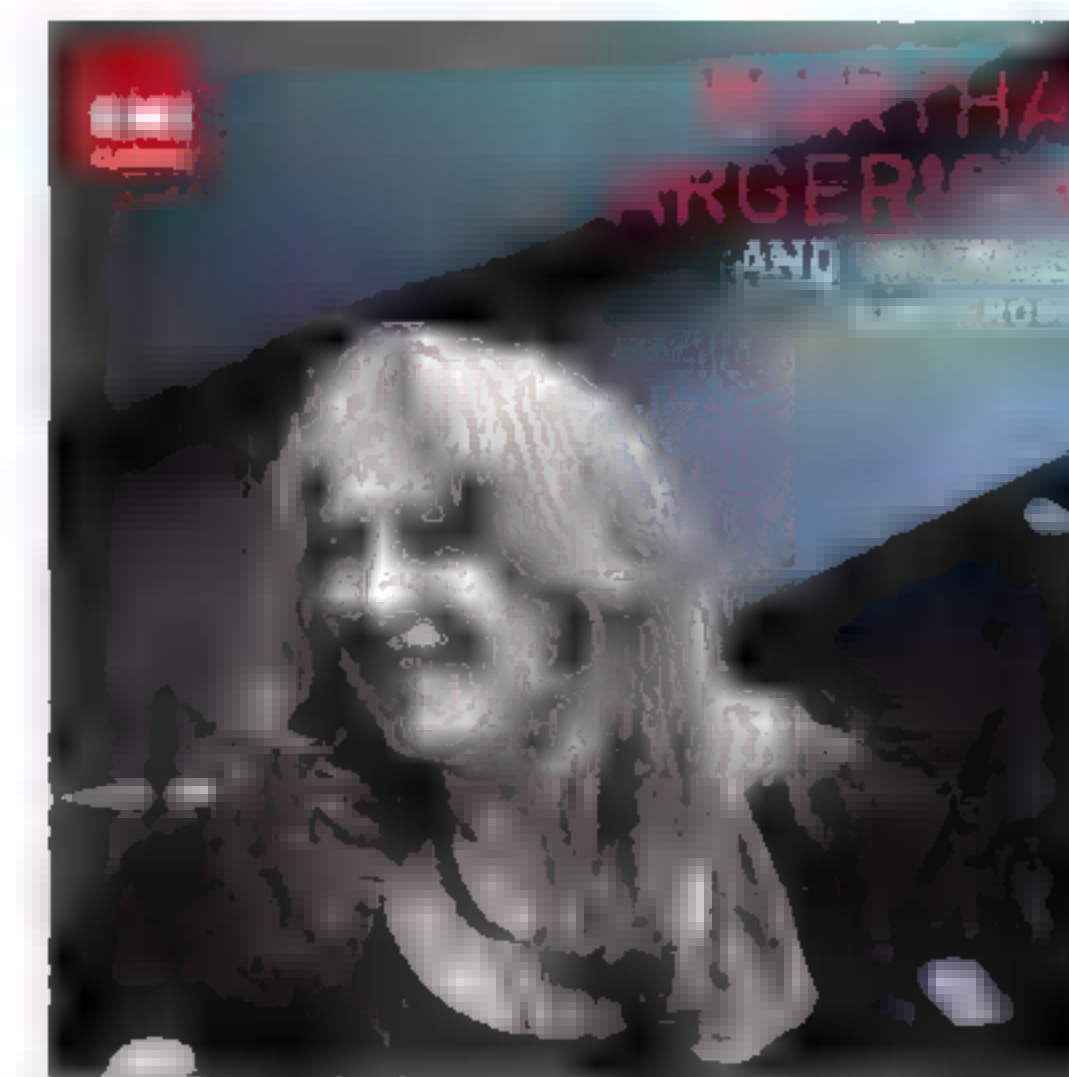
SCHMITT La tragédie de Salomé **FRANCK** Symphony in D
Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra / Yannick Nézet-Séguin
ATMA Classique
This issue's prodigious cover star must spend half his life in the studio, given the number of recordings he churns out - good for him, and good for us! His track record on, well, record has been erratic but when he's on fire, as here, he delivers in spades. The Franck is excellent but the real draw here is the Schmitt *Salomé* - sensual and dramatic.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**



SUK Asrael
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras
Supraphon
This isn't the first posthumously released new recording from Mackerras and I'm certain it won't be the last. It is, though, a timely testimony to his famed brilliance in Czech music. Our reviewer Rob Cowan reports that this *Asrael* runs the well-nigh definitive Václav Talich recording close, than which there can be no higher praise. A visionary reading of a masterpiece.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



GÓRECKI Three String Quartets
Royal Quartet
Hyperion
The Royal Quartet clearly don't believe in making life easy for themselves. In recording the Górecki quartets they go head to head with the Kronos Quartet, for whom the works were composed and whose recordings are benchmarks. But the Royals dive into the music hearts first, emotions to the fore though with technical proficiency hardly lagging behind, to provide worthy alternatives. It paid off.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 65**



'LIVE FROM LUGANO 2010' Martha Argerich *pf* with various artists
EMI
These annual Lugano sets from Martha Argerich's festival in Switzerland can be mixed bags. But this latest instalment is the best yet. The sheer quality of interpretations from the likes of Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Stephen Kovacevich et al is staggering. And Argerich herself in Chopin's First Piano Concerto delivers a reading so fleet yet detailed, so deeply felt, it quite blew me away.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



SCHUBERT Die schöne Müllerin
Christopher Maltman *bar*
Graham Johnson *pf*
Wigmore Hall Live
Christopher Maltman won the coveted Lieder prize at the 1997 Cardiff Singer of the World and it's interesting to hear how his art in that *fach* has developed. The voice has roughened somewhat - this is not primarily a *Schöne Müllerin* about mellifluous singing, though he is extremely sensitive to melodic values. Rather, it's filled with drama, soul and character: a highly individual journey.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**

Recording of the month

JAN DISMAS ZELENSKA

Officium defunctorum ZWV 47

Requiem in D ZWV 46

ACCENT

Deutschlandradio Kultur

Collegium 1704 & Collegium Vocale 1704

Václav Luks, conductor

ZELENSKA Officium defunctorum. Requiem
Collegium Vocale 1704; Collegium 1704 / Václav Luks
Accent
"Requiem, written / oh sorrow! / for the exequies of my Master, His Most Serene Majesty the King of Poland, the Elector of Saxony, Friedrich August [...] composed in the greatest haste. NB: the day before..." So wrote Jan Dismas Zelenka of his quickly penned Requiem for Augustus the Strong. The speed of composition

doesn't dim what remains a magnificent work, here paired with the equally impressive *Officium defunctorum*.
Marking the death of Augustus would have had special meaning for Zelenka. The composer was de facto head of music for the Catholic Church in Saxony, the king a convert to Catholicism. And this performance finds that particular connection, the real sense of emotion through the formality.
The funeral for Augustus lasted three days, so there was plenty

of music for Zelenka to supply and all of it is gathered here. Collegium Vocale bring energy and above all a sense of the moment to it, by which I mean artists and listener alike feel some of the urgency, the upheaval, the sorrow and even the disorientation that Zelenka and the mourners must have experienced.
It's a searing recording that simply has to be heard, one I shall return to many times. Absorbing booklet essays really enhance the experience.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

SOUNDBITES

Gallery View p18 » Interview p21 » Diary p23 » One to Watch p25 »

Philip Kennicott p26 » Biography of an Instrument p28 » Quiz p29

More high-profile signings for Sony

Sony adds to its recent haul of high-profile appointments this month with two major signings – charismatic pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, who moves from EMI, and the Emerson String Quartet, who end a prolific 30-disc relationship with DG.

Andsnes is a five-time *Gramophone* Award-winner, earning the accolades for his recordings of concertos by Grieg, Schumann, Haydn and Rachmaninov, Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*, and the Brahms and Schumann Piano Quintets. His new label will be hoping he might add to this success with their first project together – a Beethoven piano concerto cycle with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. The works will be recorded over three years, beginning in 2012 with Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 3, followed by Concertos Nos 2 and 4 in 2013 and the Fifth

Piano Concerto and *Choral Fantasy* in 2014. "I feel privileged to be joining the Sony Classical roster and look forward to embarking on this personal journey," he said.

Meanwhile three-time *Gramophone* Award-winners, the Emersons, will release their first album for Sony in November featuring Mozart's last three string quartets – the *Prussian* Quartets K575, K589 and K590 – followed in 2012 by a recording of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* and Brahms's String Quintet in G, Op 111. "We have long admired Sony Classical's roster of artists and the breadth of music they record," they said.

Other recent Sony signings include pianists Lang Lang and Khatia Buniatishvili, tenor Vittorio Grigolo, bass-baritone Erwin Schrott, violinist Ray Chen, soprano Nino Machaidze and conductor Kristjan Järvi.



Leif Ove Andsnes joins the new Sony Classical Decca Classics



Pountney to work on Lulu in 2013

David Pountney: new double role at WNO

Some surprising news from Cardiff: David Pountney has been appointed chief executive and artistic director of Welsh National Opera, marking a return to Britain after a number of years working abroad.

In a career that has spanned positions at Scottish Opera, English National Opera (where he was part of the "powerhouse" triumvirate with conductor Sir Mark Elder and Sir Peter Jonas) and most recently the Bregenz Festival, Pountney has been a sometimes controversial yet always intelligently provocative director – some of his stagings, among them his ENO *Rusalka* and *Hänsel und Gretel*, are still considered

classics. His WNO track record includes an acclaimed Janáček cycle. But Pountney productions have been thinner on the ground in the UK of late.

WNO, a company that has similarly built its reputation on intelligent productions, has created a role that will combine directing duties with leading the company at an executive level. In this, it is a not-dissimilar appointment to that of Kasper Bech Holten as the Royal Opera House's new director of opera.

Pountney takes up his position in September of this year. He will work alongside the company's music director, Lothar Koenigs and the two will collaborate on a new production of Berg's *Lulu* in 2013.



The 2011 Birgit Nilsson Prize will be awarded to **Riccardo Muti** during October in Stockholm. The prize is worth \$1m, making it the largest award in classical music, and is given every two or three years to a singer or conductor. Nilsson personally chose the first laureate, Plácido Domingo, who received the prize in 2009.



Vienna's period **Orchester Wiener Akademie** has launched a project to record the complete Symphonic Tone Poems and other orchestral works of Liszt on instruments dating from the composer's own time. Volume I of "The Sound of Weimar" includes the *Dante* Symphony and Volume II features *Orpheus*.

GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

Robert Spano
heads to Aspen

Robert Spano:
to take over the
Aspen Festival

The Aspen Music Festival and School has appointed conductor Robert Spano to the post of music director.

The move follows a turbulent period for the festival that saw the previous music director, David Zinman, leave after disagreements with the festival's president, Alan Fletcher. But Spano, who also heads the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, ticks some important Aspen boxes – not least as a teacher (Spano has a long-standing affiliation with the Oberlin Conservatory). Like his predecessor, Spano is also a noted orchestra builder and has a high profile thanks to his recordings and live work.

Many important composers, as well as singers and instrumentalists, have passed through Aspen's school – most of them now regularly return as festival performers – and here, too, Spano is a fitting choice; he has made a point of championing contemporary composers such as Jennifer Higdon and Osvaldo Golijov. Spano is the fourth music director in the festival's history.

Three wonderful violin sonatas – Franck, Debussy and Ravel – but contrasting ones, too. Talk us through the programme.

First and foremost I absolutely love the pieces on this disc. Also, I do think they complement each other beautifully, even though they are separated by decades. The relationship between violin and piano is very interesting: in the Debussy, they almost blend into one another, but they are very much one voice, one colour. In the Ravel it is absolutely extraordinary that the material we are playing is completely contrasting: we're almost completely unrelated and we could be playing different pieces – but in a good way! With the Franck the piano is almost like an organ. I don't want to say the violin is subservient to the piano, but it is a tremendous piece for piano really.

You and pianist Martin Roscoe clearly had a very good musical rapport.

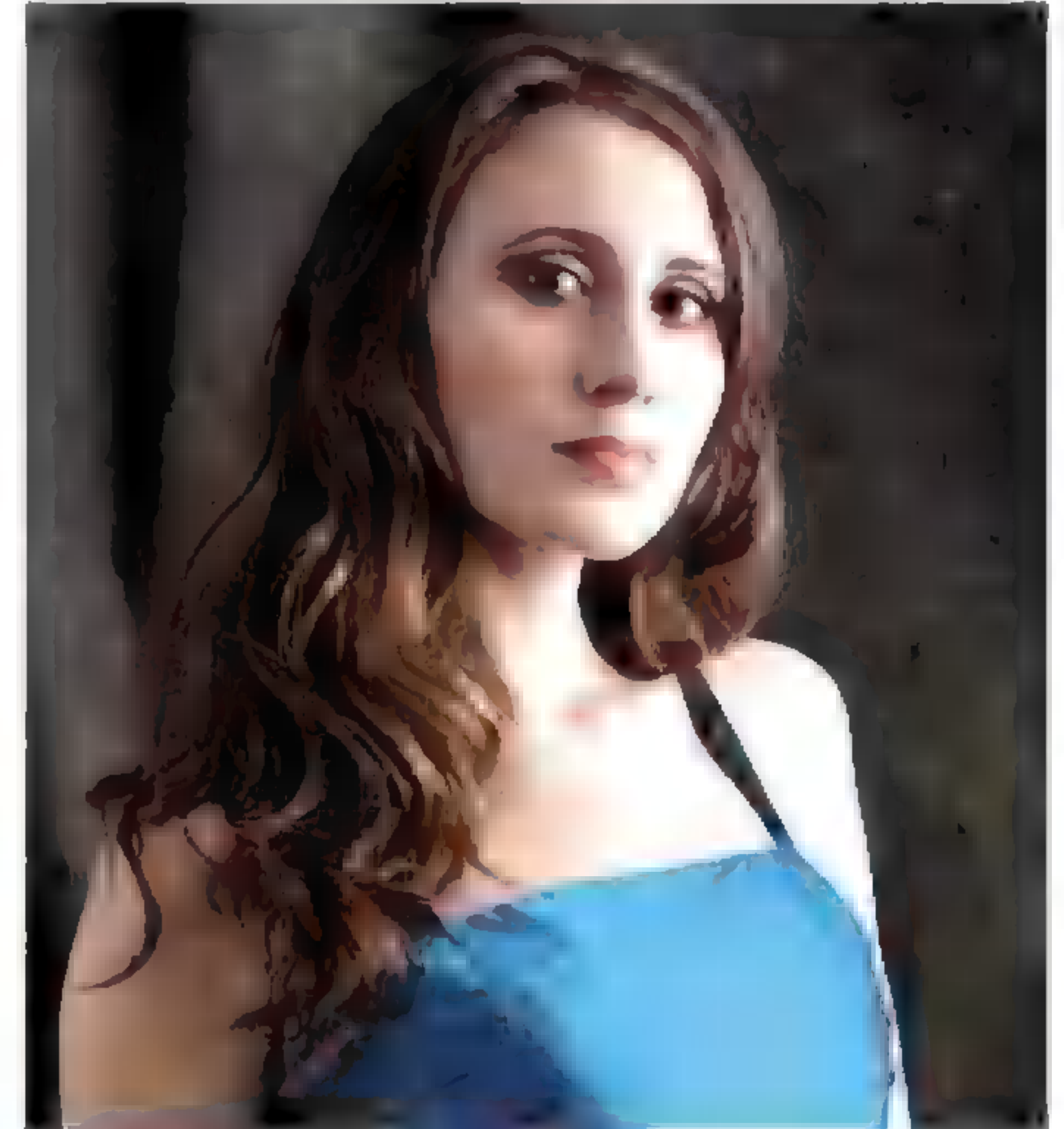
It was a great joy to work with Martin, he's such a fantastic pianist. In the recording studio we had lots of debate and were getting very excited about different ways of playing things. But we had great mutual respect for each other – which makes it very rewarding.

Where did you record the disc?

In Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh. It was lovely

Jennifer Pike

The violinist on her new disc of French sonatas



to get away from it all and immerse ourselves in playing such lovely music.

Tell me about your next recording plans.

I'm recording the Chausson Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet, with the Doric String Quartet. It's a fantastic piece and hasn't been recorded very often. After that, it's the Rózsa Violin Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic and Rumon Gamba.

Jennifer Pike's French sonatas recording is reviewed on page 64

TAKING NOTE
WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...*The Guardian*

While disastrous for some organisations, the UK Arts Council cuts allowed most of "England's big national organisations to hang on to much of their subsidy". The biggest recipients are those companies

based in the capital – including the Royal Opera House, Southbank Centre and English National Opera – despite 15 per cent cuts in real terms. The established orchestras – London Sinfonietta, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and Philharmonia – were down by 11 per cent.

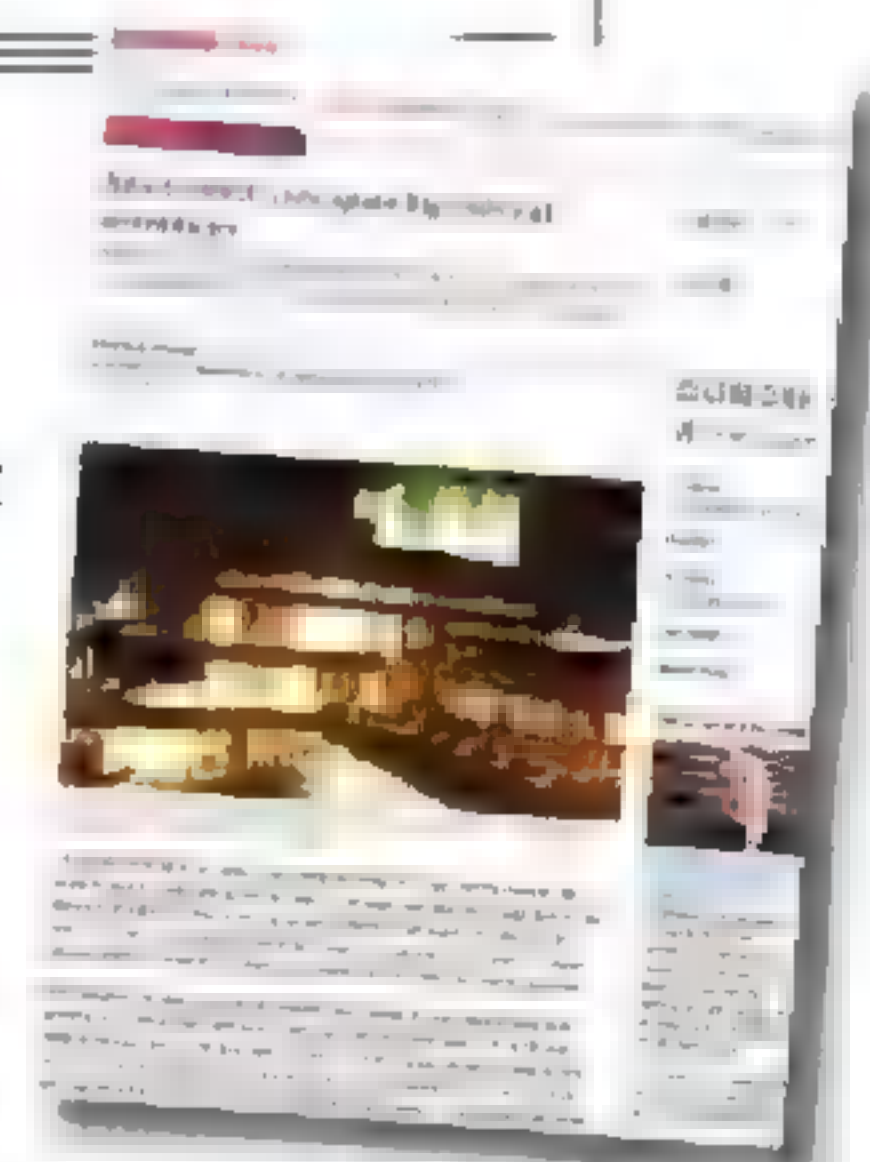
www.guardian.co.uk

The New York Times

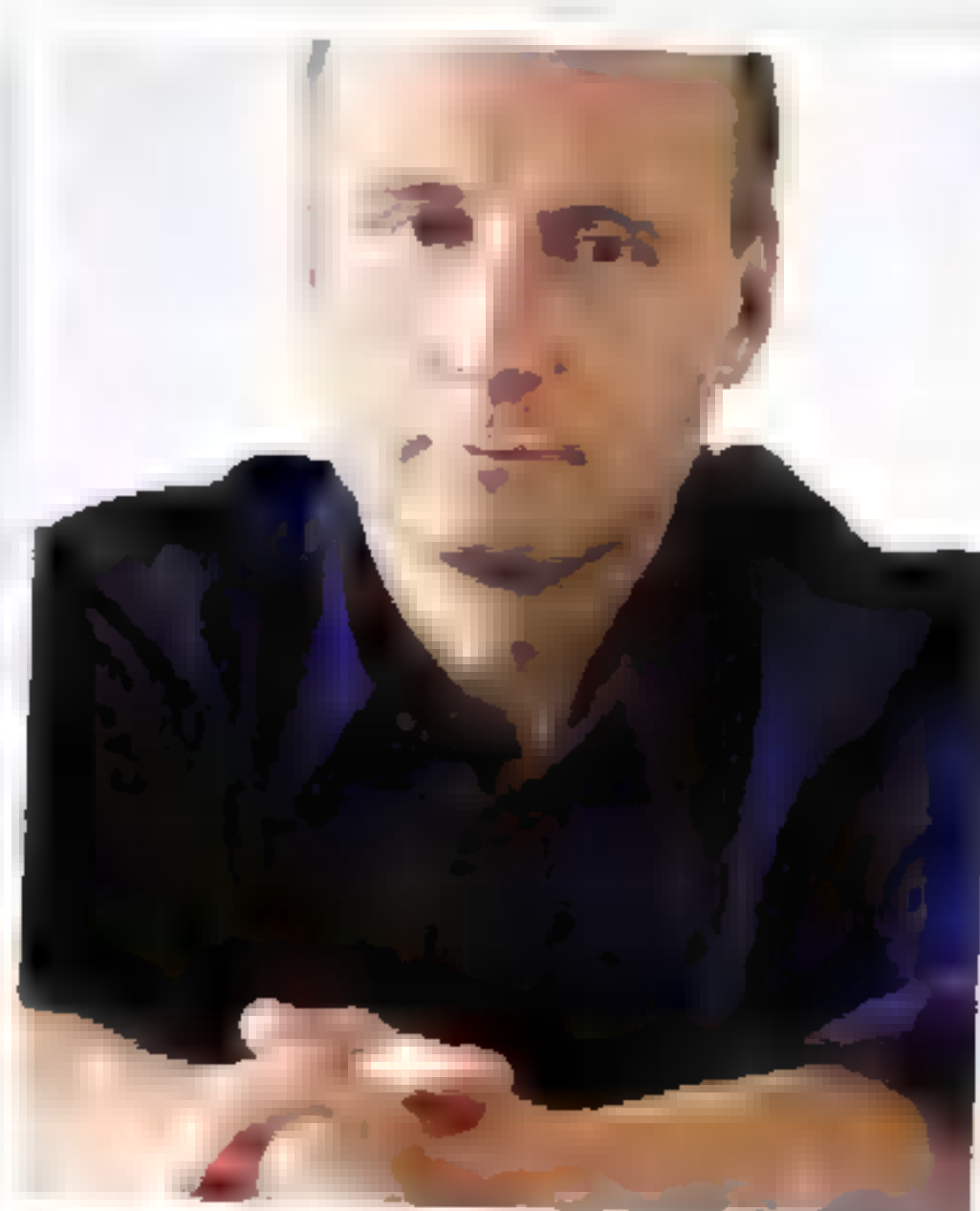
Metropolitan Opera's tour to Japan, scheduled for June, "is in jeopardy at this time", said general manager Peter Gelb. In the wake of damage from the Japanese earthquake and tsunami, and ongoing problems with the Fukushima nuclear power plant, the trip could not be confirmed. Several years in the planning, the

tour would be the Met's seventh to Japan – and the first since 2006. "If the State Department continues to warn that travel to Japan is not advisable, we will, of course, cancel the tour," said Gelb.

www.nytimes.com



Paavo Järvi is to remain chief conductor of Orchestre de Paris for a further three years, having extended his contract to 2015-16. He will continue to conduct the orchestra in 28 concerts per year. Also renewing his contract is Andrew Litton, who will remain as the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra's music director until October 2015.



Three 2011 Avery Fischer Career grants, each worth \$25,000, have been awarded to violinist **Caroline Goulding**, and pianists Benjamin Hochman and Chu-Fang Huang. The awards, given by New York's Lincoln Center, provide support for instrumentalists with potential for solo careers. Hilary Hahn and Kirill Gerstein are former winners.



GALLERY VIEW

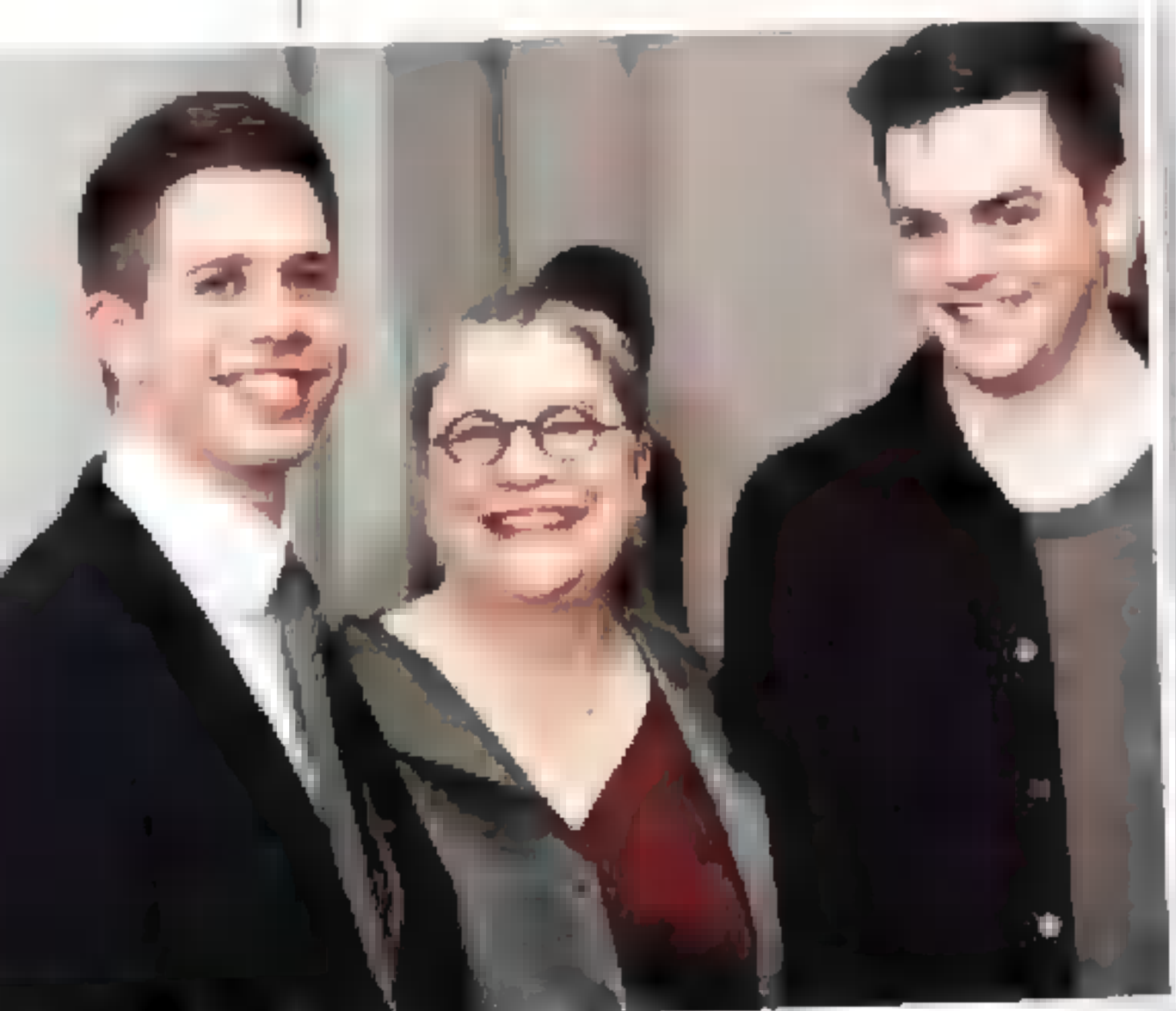


Shining a light on 'film opera'

Film on the concert stage - let alone opera stage - is not unusual. Director Mike Figgis recently used film to dramatise Lucrezia Borgia's unorthodox back story as part of English National Opera's staging of Donizetti's opera. Elsewhere, video artist Bill Viola has worked on a *Tristan und Isolde* production while, in *Pictures Reframed*, Leif Ove Andsnes and Robin Rhodes used video in exploring Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Dutch

composer Michel Van der Aa takes this one stage further: for him, film is as much a part of the score as the live instrumentation, the interaction between musicians and movie as relevant as that between soloist and ensemble. *Up-close* (pictured) is his new work for cello, ensemble and film - or, as he puts it, "a film opera for cello and ensemble". On screen an elderly woman wanders through a stage devoid of musicians, before finding

herself in a mystical forest and entering a dilapidated cottage which houses some kind of communication device. Meanwhile, soloist Sol Gabetta - currently *Gramophone's* Young Artist of the Year - performs live to one side, the music (and movement in moments) sometimes separate from, sometimes interacting with the film. The result is an unsettling and thought-provoking strange stage world of broken barriers and inverted norms.



The Opera Company of Philadelphia, and New York's Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group are launching the USA's first collaborative operatic composer-in-residence programme with a grant of \$1.4m. The companies cooperated in the past on *Dark Sisters* by librettist **Stephen Karam** and composer **Nico Muhly**.



EMI/Virgin Classics has renewed its exclusive recording contract with *Gramophone* Award-winning mezzo **Joyce DiDonato**. "Since her first recordings with Virgin, Joyce's fame has grown internationally and we are very proud that she is now one of the most sought-after opera singers," said president Alain Lanceron.

The Specialist Classical Chart

The UK's best-selling pure classical releases

OFFICIAL Compiled in association with the BPI
by The Official Charts Company

- 1 (2) **Forever Vienna**
André Rieu *Decca*
- 2 (1) **Striggio - Mass in 40 parts**
I Fagiolini / Robert Hollingworth *Decca*
- 3 (4) **Shostakovich - Symphonies Nos 1 & 3** RLPO / Petrenko *Naxos*
- 4 (7) **Voices - Chant from Avignon**
Benedictine Nuns of Notre Dame *Decca*
- 5 (Re) **Mahler - Symphony No 5**
LSO / Valery Gergiev *LSO Live*
- 6 (3) **Pergolesi - Stabat Mater**
Netrebko; Pizzolato / Pappano *DG*
- 7 (New) **Alwyn - Violin Concerto**
Lorraine McAslan; RLPO *Naxos*
- 8 (New) **Reger - Piano Concerto**
Marc André Hamelin / Volkov *Hyperion*
- 9 (5) **The 50 Greatest Pieces of Classical Music** LPO / Parry x5
- 10 (11) **Schubert - Winterreise**
Mark Padmore; Paul Lewis *HM*

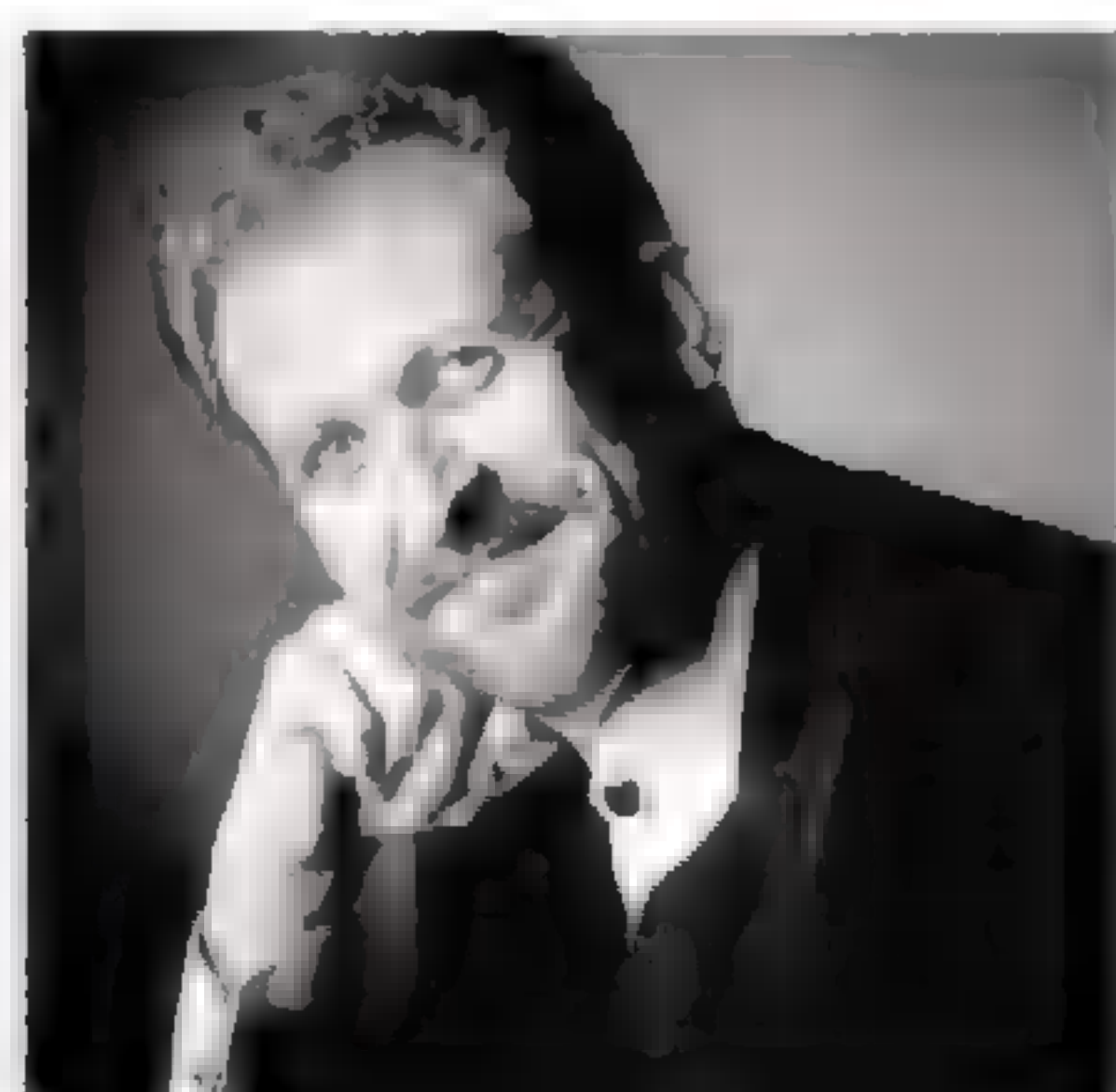


Chart for week ending April 2, 2011
(previous week's position in brackets).

Log on to www.gramophone.co.uk for weekly updates of the chart, along with reviews of many of the featured recordings.

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Martin Wright will succeed Donald Nally as Lyric Opera of Chicago's chorus master from 2012-13. Michael Black, who takes a leave of absence from Opera Australia, will serve as interim chorus master during 2011-12 while Wright concludes his commitment as artistic director of the Netherlands Opera Chorus. "I am excited to return to the US for a company I have long admired," said Wright.



GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

JoAnn Falletta

The American conductor on standing up for Suk with a new recording

There seems to be more Suk around on disc.

It's nice that this music is having a renaissance. Suk's music is very rarely played in the States. Working on this repertoire, one musician came up to me and said, "Why don't we know this music?". It's enchanting to play.

So what drew you to it?

I make it a practice to seek out music of the past that's not known, sitting it alongside my studies of contemporary music. And I was also intrigued by Suk's relationship with Dvořák. The more I learnt about Suk, the more I was interested by his early and his late music. He had the great tragedy of his life in his 30s, when he lost his beloved wife, Dvořák's daughter, and Dvořák himself, who was a hero as well as a father-in-law to him. And Suk's music became much more introspective and darker after that. But the three early pieces we've included on this recording – all with his own unique and modern-feeling bohemian quality – give a snapshot of a life filled with hope and joy for the future: a future that was going to change drastically and forever.

And did you find musical links between those periods?

He linked them himself. *Fairy Tale*, which is on our recording, is an early piece but Suk



used two of its themes when he later came to write his *Asrael* Symphony – that unbelievably harrowing lament of loss. He uses the princess theme as his wife's theme in *Asrael*, and the death of the king music is used to memorialise Dvořák. So something about that early piece still connected to him.

Perhaps, then, *Asrael* is also a lament for his old self?

Yes, and about remembering that spring of life when he was happy. The most hopeful thing in Suk's works are the most devastating, because you know where it's going to end.

Suk's *Fairy Tale* is reviewed on page 63

Two new labels launch

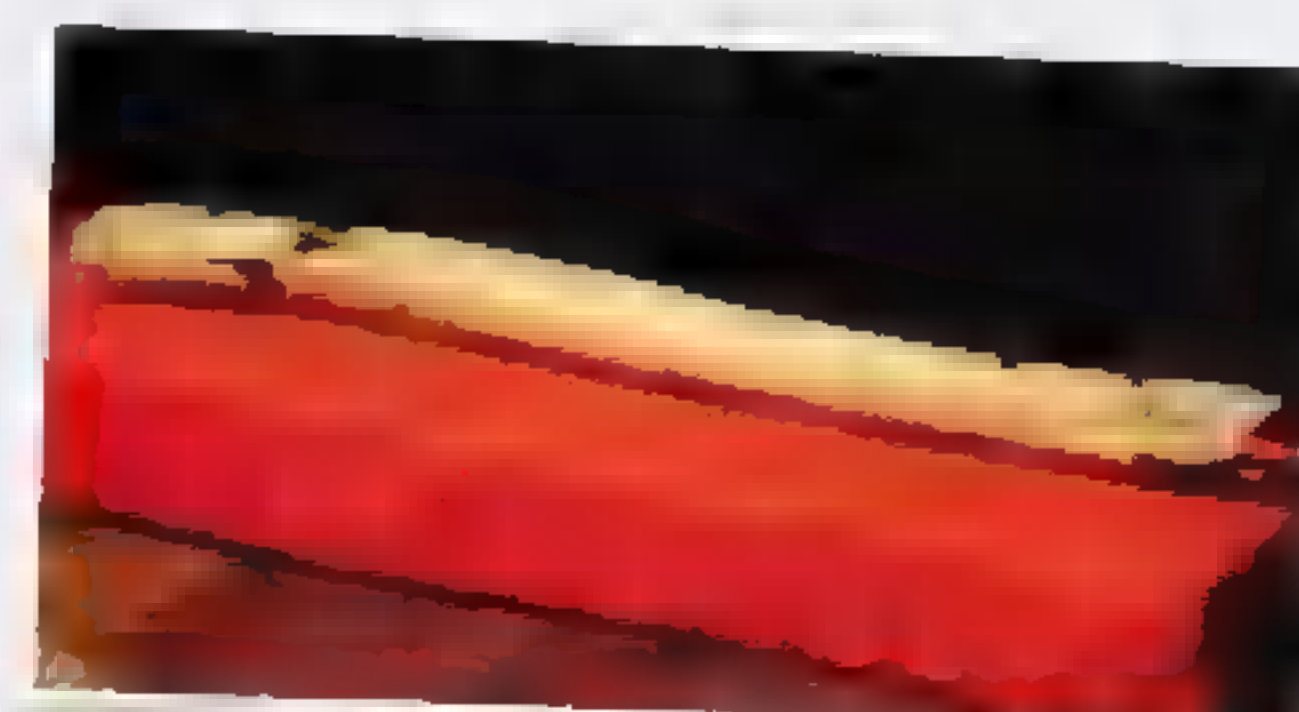
In these economically difficult times two new recording ventures are bucking the trend. The Brussels Philharmonic has launched its own label, Brussels Philharmonic Recordings, with Debussy's *La mer*. Further works to be released include Dvořák's Ninth, Beethoven's Third and Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphonies,

followed by discs of 20th-century music with links to Brussels.

Also launching is a new service devoted entirely to opera sets. EPC Distribution is a white-label service specialising in working with opera companies to issue a range of new and archive recordings. First to be released in June are a trio of Joan Sutherland performances with Opera Australia, each conducted by Richard Bonygne.

Oxford's Bate Collection of Musical Instruments – celebrating its 40th anniversary – has received its oldest item by nearly 200 years.

The 13th century **deer-bone whistle** was donated by Peter Henderson. The instrument was probably designed to play "traditional folk dance tunes," said museum manager Andy Lamb.



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A CONVERSATION WITH...



Thomas Zehetmair

The violinist-conductor meets with **AJ Goldmann** to discuss music-making on the Tyne and recording two Hans Gál world premieres

Thomas Zehetmair ushers me into a meticulously decorated flat with high ceilings and immaculately white carpeting, in a fashionable district of Berlin. We are at the home of Ingeborg Behnke, a violin-maker and friend who is taking a look at Zehetmair's 1730 Stradivarius. Later this week, Zehetmair and his wife, viola player Ruth Killius, will give a private recital here, previewing a forthcoming programme at Wigmore Hall. I resist the urge to ask for an invitation.

Zehetmair maintains eye contact while speaking, seeming serious without being severe. The effect is enhanced by his musical speech patterns and the down-to-earth way he describes his career as

violin virtuoso and music director of the Gateshead-based Northern Sinfonia, where he recently renewed his contract until August 2014.

"It's one of the best halls in the world," he says of The Sage Gateshead, the orchestra's home perched above the Tyne. "It's exciting and full of fantasy. It's very warm and still very clear, which is one of the reasons we can do larger symphonic repertoire. The acoustics support us very well. You can hear all parts of the orchestra, which also helps us to achieve stylistic range within a single piece." Next season will bring a Schubert symphony cycle and Tchaikovsky's Fifth. "I am sure that it's not the first aim of a composer to write for a certain orchestra size. I think it's more about the substance of the pieces," Zehetmair adds.

He expresses admiration for the orchestra's youthful spirit. "I find that when I have worked with this orchestra for many years and we can still achieve a fresh and powerful sound, this is a good sign," he says approvingly.

In addition to advocating the works of living British composers (Philip Cashian, Simon Bainbridge and John Casken come to mind),

the orchestra also champions those who have been overlooked. Recently the Northern Sinfonia taped the premiere recordings of the first two symphonies of the Austrian-Jewish composer Hans Gál for the Avie label. "The challenge here is to bring a work to the audience and they will listen to it for the first time," he says.

Gál's Second Symphony was written during the Second World War, a context that Zehetmair considers important. "The music is very easy to understand. It really looks back in a nostalgic way. And I think that projects what Gál has suffered and how he lost many family members. It is very intense and you can hear huge melancholy but also some *scherzando* and some hope," he says.

For the recordings, the Gál pieces have been paired with Schubert symphonies. "Schubert opened a huge wide door for a very strong Austrian tradition to come.

And Hans Gál is the one who kind of closes that door," he explains.

Zehetmair says he can count on his musicians to show dedication and flair during his time with them. "I know the musicians, I know their standards, their discipline and I know their ability to perform in a way that makes music alive. I don't find it interesting to play a piece like in a museum. Music has to do with life. Music has to do with drama."

Through his association with the Northern Sinfonia, is Zehetmair possibly in danger of becoming better known as a conductor than as a violinist? Does he ever see a conflict between these two roles? "When I'm conducting an orchestra, I'm a conductor. When I'm playing a concerto, I'm a violinist," he says earnestly. "The main issue is to convince people that listening to classical music is one of the greatest experiences you can have." ●

Gál's Symphony No 1 is out now; Symphony No 2 is released later this year

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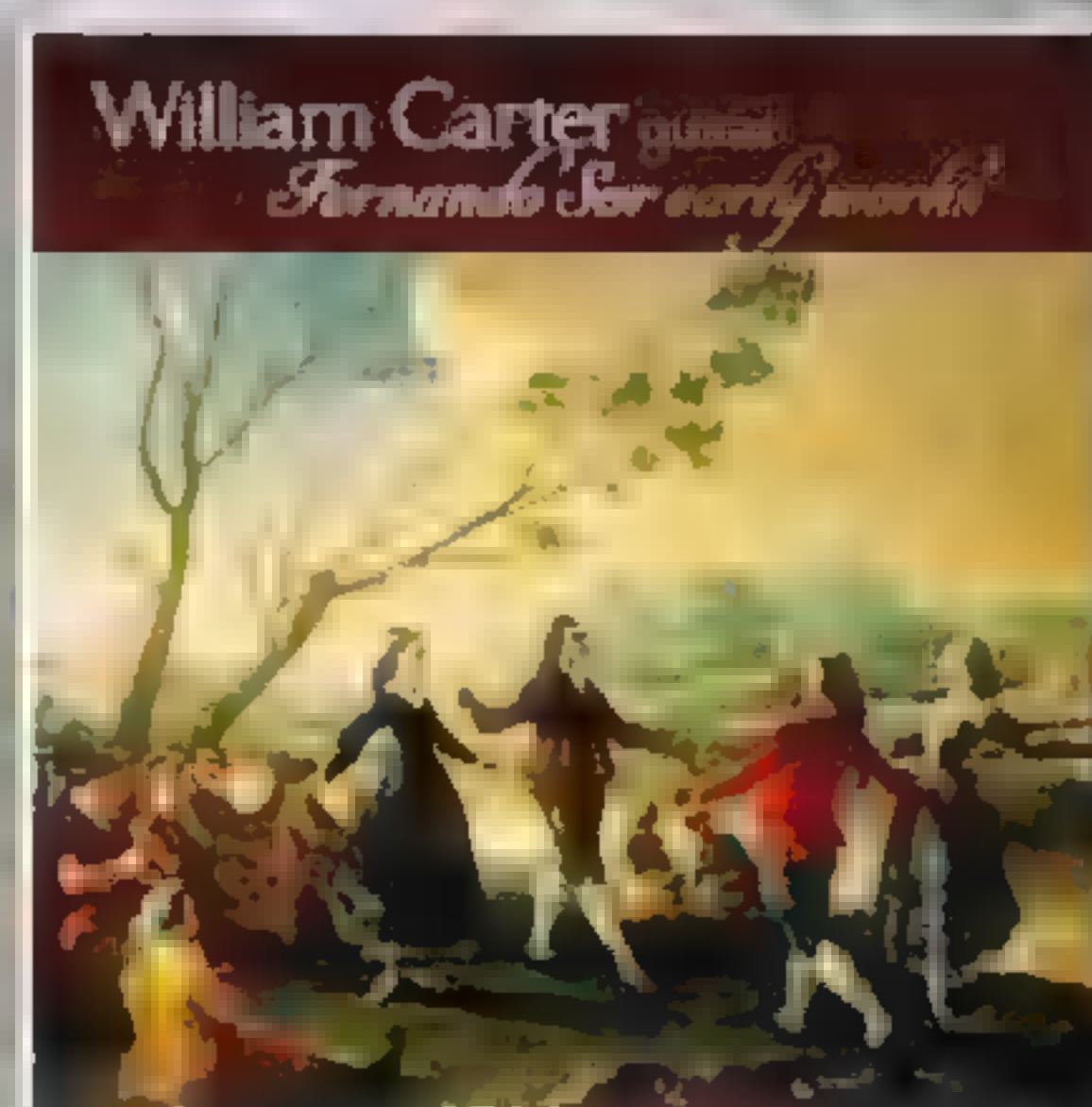
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Christopher Maltman

The baritone ponders the validity of recording – can a recorded performance ever truly leap from its digital container and into hearts and minds?

The enduring nature of artistic output is implicit for many artists, though not for me. The haunting palette of Turner's venetian *Moonrise* or David's heroic torso will be contemplated and enjoyed year upon year. Composers remain, but performance is ephemeral. The outpourings of singers have been reliably captured only in the past 60 or 70 years. I do not adore crackly shellac. But, even in this current age of unsurpassed aural fidelity, I am still nagged by the question, why bother? Of course I moon over recordings of the usual suspects. However, they remain facsimiles of great events, dulling the extra dimensions of human communication which elevate mere singing to art and sometimes leading listeners down a path of expectation that is simply unattainable in the brutal world of performance. So, why do I bother? Three recent experiences have tipped my scales in favour of doing so.

Studio recording is a curious sub-species of live performance and becoming ever more rare. My last such project was an as-yet-unreleased disc of Poulenc songs in the company of Graham Johnson. Curious because it is abstract; my audience a half-a-dozen microphones, my hall a preternaturally still church. What is needed in this atmospheric void is input, lots of it. Endless subtle course corrections from the French coach, the producer's gentle insistence upon Poulenc's notes rather than my own and the uplifting cocoon of Graham's playing. All these things combine



'Only under true battle conditions can musical expression fully blossom'

to drive my own interpretation towards escape velocity, allowing it (hopefully) to leap from its digital container and into hearts and minds. For, although producers can fuse severed phrases, massage errant dynamics and vanish unwanted breaths, alchemy eludes us even here and lead will never become gold.

Live recording (one of the great oxymorons) is becoming ubiquitous and represents a happy medium, if you'll forgive the pun. It allows performers to forget, at least partially, the microphones and adds the invaluable dimension an audience brings. Sixteen years into my career I can say without doubt that it is only under true battle conditions that musical expression can fully blossom. And there is no greater battle to be fought than performing

Schubert's three masterful cycles, *Die schöne Müllerin*, *Winterreise* and *Schwanengesang* (which, yes, is a true cycle). Again accompanied by Graham Johnson, our recent performances of these were recorded for Wigmore Hall Live. All three are endless, awe-inspiring journeys requiring humble re-examination with each iteration and I would not have been able to delve so deeply within them without Graham's unparalleled appreciation of Schubert's works. But, most astonishingly, within each separate performance they become distinct, living things, possessed of their own personality and direction; an over-arching subtlety impossible within the sterility of the studio. If microphones can capture even a little of the spontaneity of these necessarily unique events,

warts and all, surely it can only be a good thing?

While my rant has been audiocentric thus far, I cannot ignore film. The challenge there is entirely different. Audio recording is a representative medium, whereas filmmaking is an art in its own right. For this reason, I feel the melding of opera and film has been problematic at best. Merely filming an opera is no good, neither is compromising both film and opera to make an operatic film in which neither succeeds. I've been lucky enough to make two films which buck the trend, *The Death of Klinghoffer* with Penny Woolcock and, most recently, a film adaptation of *Don Giovanni*, called *Juan*, with Kasper Holten. Both combine opera and film in an uncompromising way, *Juan* especially so being heavily cut and sung in colloquial English. It remains the most demanding thing I have ever done and, I believe, will set a new benchmark for opera on film.

I will probably never be free of my vacillation regarding the ultimate importance of recordings. Live performance is where it must all begin and end. But the experiences documented here have broadened my appreciation of music and its performance and forced me to expand as an artist. I am proud of them and, replicas or not, each is at the very least representative and valid. Besides, craving a sliver of immortality is what humans do and being human is pretty much the whole point. ●

Die schöne Müllerin on Wigmore Hall Live is reviewed on page 89

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ONE TO WATCH

Yeree Suh

A René Jacobs discovery, the Korean soprano looks set for a big career

Making your professional debut under René Jacobs in *Orfeo* doesn't look bad on your CV. Given the singers to have come out of that particular stable (Alexandrina Pendatchanska, Bernarda Fink, Andreas Scholl), it is in itself almost a guaranteed stamp of quality.

It's a stamp that Yeree Suh increasingly looks (and, moreover, sounds) like she deserves. The Korean soprano has since sung under the batons of Philippe Herreweghe, Ton Koopman and Masaaki Suzuki. Some impressive videos posted on YouTube as well as early recordings provide evidence of a gorgeous coloratura voice – not slimline to the point of blandness, like certain famous coloratura sopranos of the past, but dark and expressive. It is still, though, flexible, fluid and seemingly able to cope with the most demanding of bravura displays.

Yet Yeree Suh is not content to restrict herself to accepted coloratura roles with some Handel here, a Donizetti Lucia there, perhaps. She also sallies into recent and contemporary fare, bringing to the likes of Pierre Boulez and Matthias Pintscher a technical assurance which that end of the soprano repertoire is not always afforded.

It is contemporary music which finds the singer recording for the new downloads label Resonus Classics. A disc of Judith Bingham's chamber works, "Landscapes, Real and Imagined", out in May, features Yeree Suh with, variously, piano and string trio (all members of Chamber Domaine). There's likely to be more where that came from. ●



PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIC RICHMOND

Philip Kennicott

An appreciation of the late critic John Steane from the other side of the pond



'He mixed gentility with criticism in a way that is impossible in the US'

It's possible that I met the critic JB Steane in passing but, if so, I don't remember it – and that's a good thing. I prefer my imagined view of the man, based on the sparse but not infrequent glimpses he gave of his life in his reviews and articles and, even more, upon an American's fantasy of what a dignified life as a music critic might look like.

Steane, who died on March 17, was by no means a confessional writer. But his longer pieces, especially his wonderful sketches of the "Singers of the Century", often began as literary rambles, with a natural essayist's flair for mixing personal detail with critical inquiry. There was a Proustian quality to Steane's memories, which always seemed terribly remote yet palpable at the same time, brilliant moments saved from the oblivion of a far-away past. Decades ago a friend might have said something perceptive about an obscure singer, an aperçu that remained filed away in his vast mental compendium until, one day, it found its way into the permanence of print. His mind seemed equally incapable of forgetting a performance and one always envied the astonishing list of world-shaking premieres at which he was in attendance. Even more impressive were the accidental discoveries, as when a "bad night at the opera" suddenly yielded up Bridgette Fassbaender, singing Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*. "Not since the retirement of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf has there been a singer with such a sense of presence, both in appearance and voice," he wrote later.

That sentence, with its major qualifying clause – "both in appearance and voice" – has Steane's characteristic authority, enthusiasm and precision. You often had the sense that if you could parse his adjectives carefully enough you might find every singer had a particular, even mathematical, valuation. But of course he was never so reductive. He seemed more interested in sketching the voice in words than rating it on the crude axis of better and worse. When he wanted to put a new, perhaps over-hyped, star in perspective, he would draw on his vast memory of past performance and let the shades of greatness take the upstart down a few pegs. And so a promising tenor might be reminded of particular details, worthy of emulation, from recordings by Jadowker, Caruso and Martinelli. The list might be so long you felt sorry for the singer with so much left to learn.

American critics are supposed to admire Virgil Thomson as the exemplar of musical analysis. He wrote with speed and fluency, great vigour and vivid observation. He was brilliant on deadline. But over the years, especially since his death in 1989, Thomson's star has fallen a bit. Now it seems that it

was self-interest that quickened his judgement and all too frequently spite that made his prose lucid. Beyond Thomson, there are few critics that critics uniformly admire, except for names so dusty – Shaw and Hanslick – that it's pretentious to mention them.


Steane, however, is I think universally admired from across the pond, in part because he seemed to mix gentility and good humour with criticism in a way that is rare if not impossible in the US. From brief references to his larger life, you felt sure he was surrounded by a community of music in a way that is uncommon in the States, where critics are lone wolves and live mostly cut off from each other and from people who make music.

Certainly he wrote for an expert audience. If young critics – and bad ones – strive to show how much they know, Steane never brought a name or a recording before the reader without it being manifestly relevant. But he also assumed that his readers knew the broad outlines of musical and performance history, if not intimately, at least thoroughly enough to

preclude tedious explanations of the obvious. Then, of course, there was his general literacy. When he took up the subject of Marilyn Horne's rather broad acting and singing style, he did so thus: "Still, you do not go to (say) Dickens for refinement, and among singers there is something very Dickensian about Marilyn Horne." Even those of us who love Horne dearly can see the truth of that. Over time her performances become, as he elaborated, "larger, and eventually larger than life".

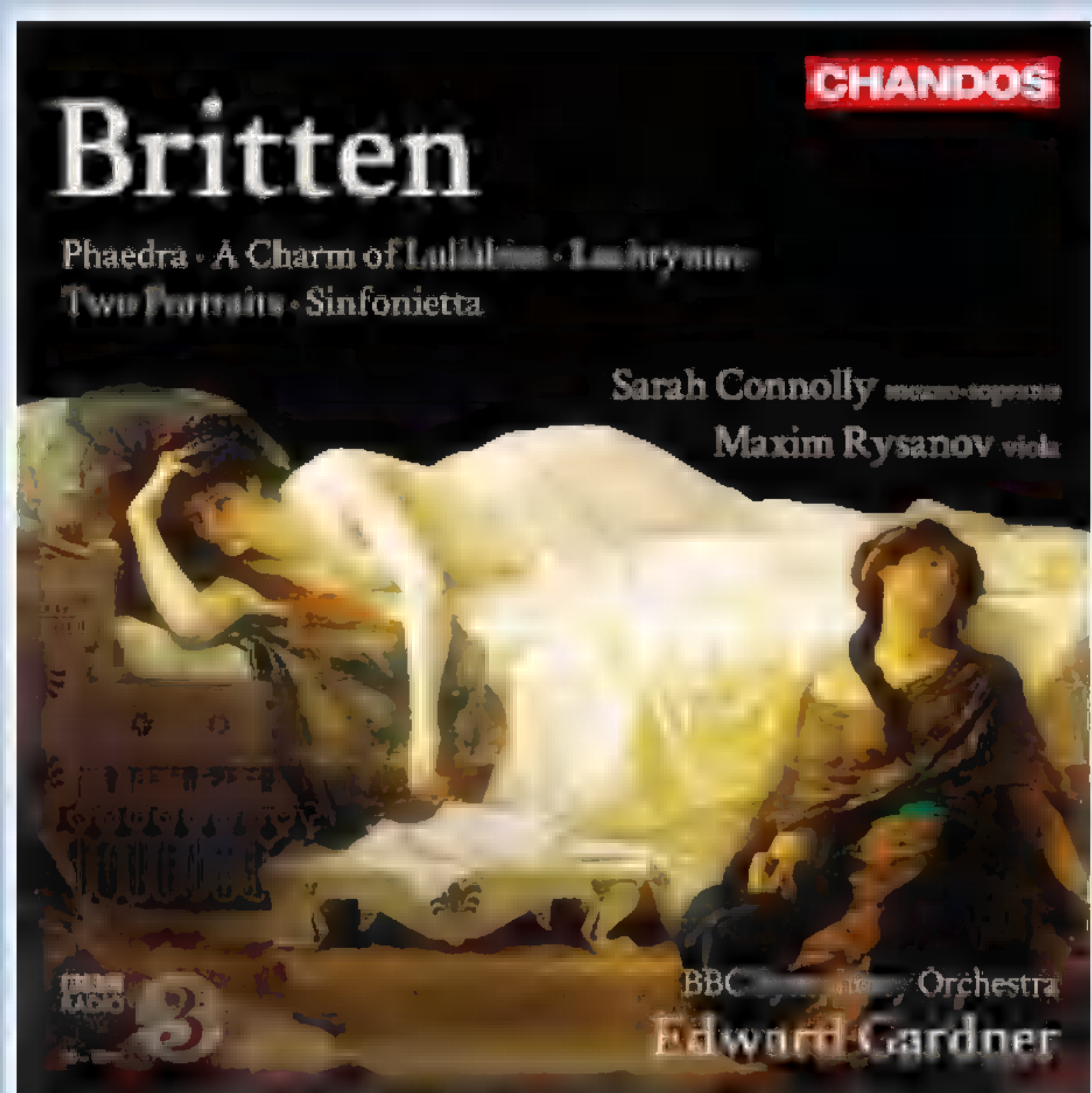
But more than anything, I am grateful to Steane for everything that I learned from him – and continue to learn as volumes of his writing come down off the shelf, once again, to amuse and enlighten. Perhaps he was channelling Plutarch when he wrote his parallel essays, comparing singers past and present. In many cases the older singer is someone I discovered because of Steane's description. His verbal portraits were so evocative

and tantalising they spurred one (in an earlier age) to haunt the record bins – and (today) to troll the internet. And when you finally found the long-sought recording, it was thanks to Steane that you could, with borrowed ears and heightened acuity, make sense of a dim voice through the scratches, pops and dust of time.

Reviewing the recorded voice may turn out to be a very short-lived and odd-side channel in the history of journalism. But even if it is an orphan form, and we all turn to some crude replacement that favours popularity over expertise and taste, Steane's writing will stand as a brilliant opus in the history of criticism. 



Steane's first issue, some 38 years ago



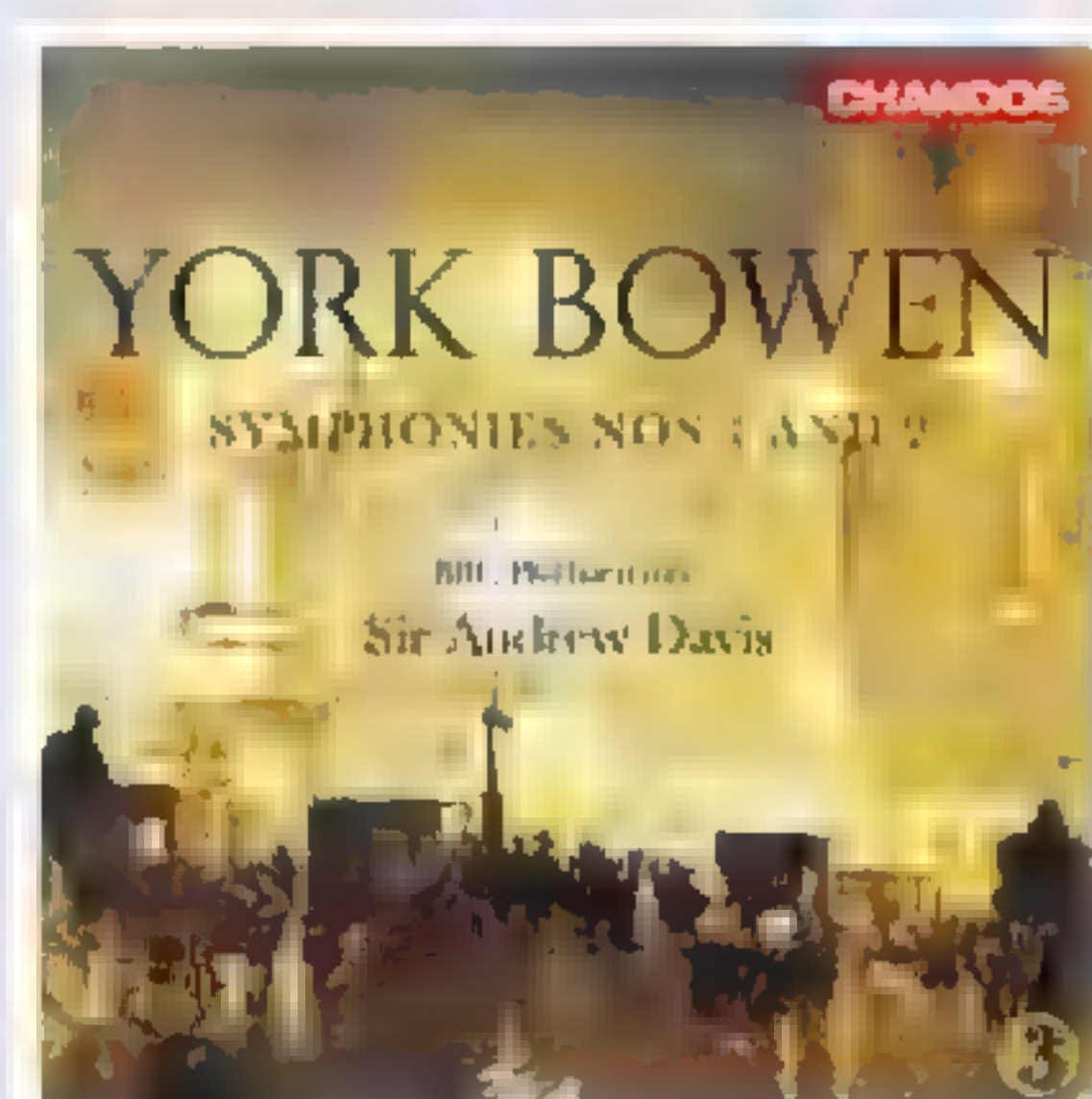
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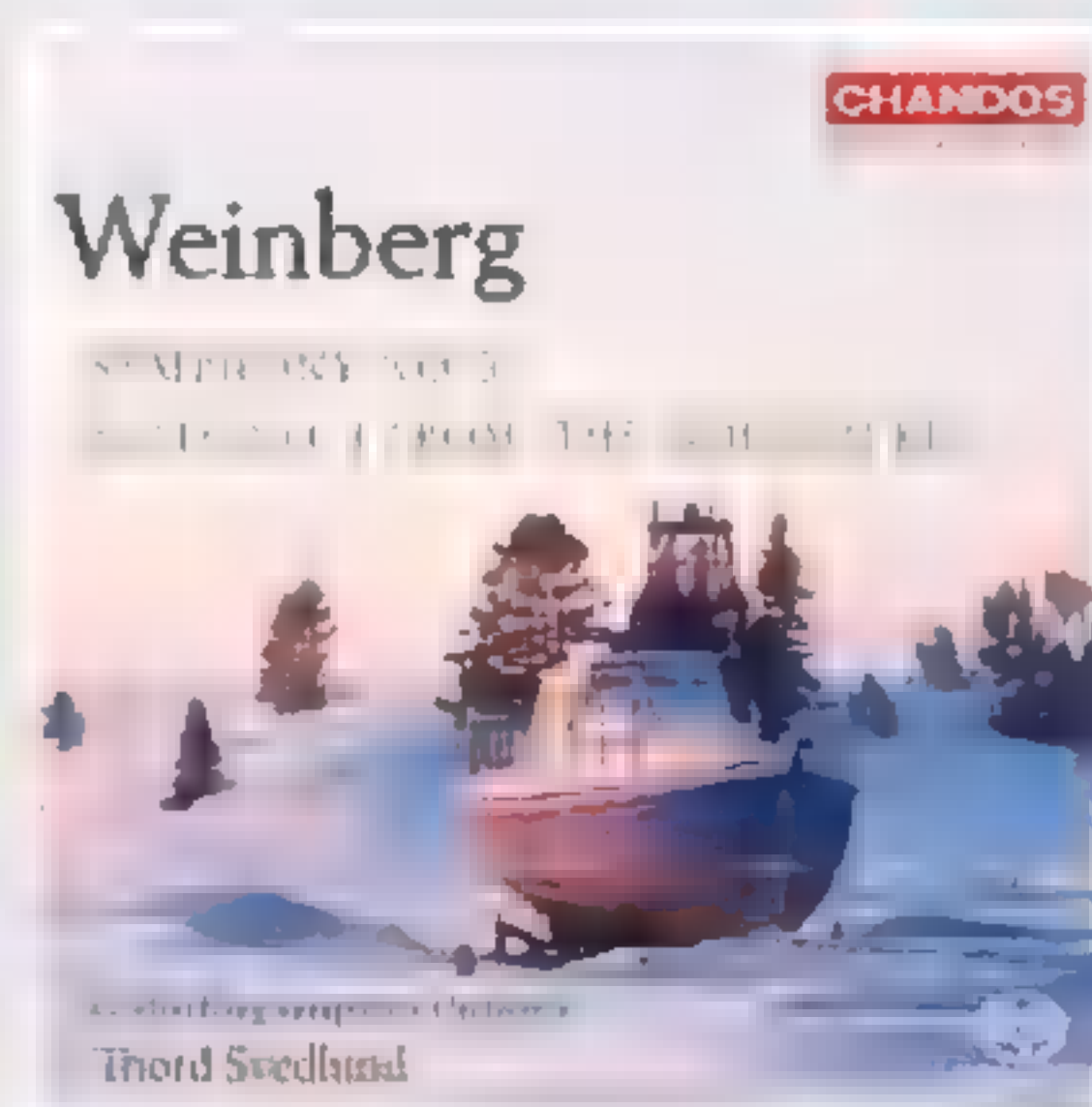
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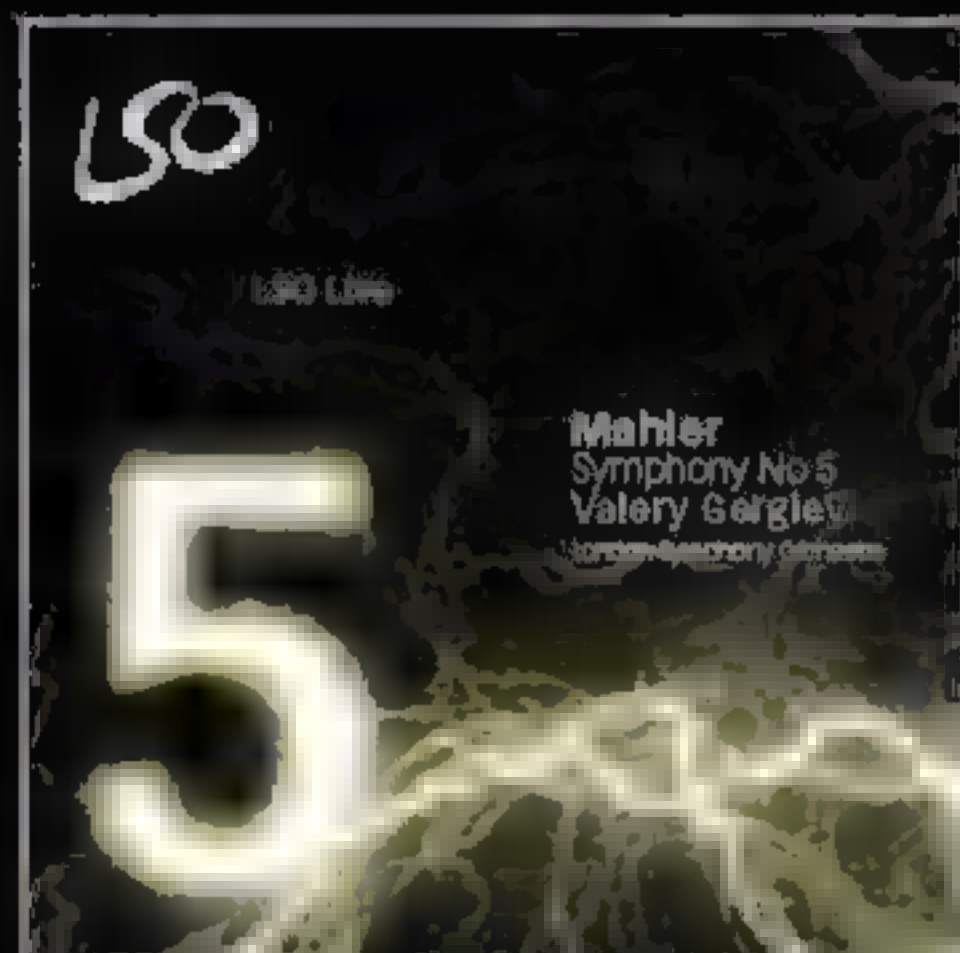
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BIOGRAPHY OF AN INSTRUMENT



A musical experiment produced mixed results, writes **Charlotte Smith**

Instruments of torture

Expecting heavenly sounds from hellish instruments was always a long shot. Yet the “racket” wrung from musical copies based on a Hieronymus Bosch painting was disappointing for Andy Lamb, manager of Oxford’s Bate Collection of Instruments.

Bosch’s famous triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, depicts in its third panel a selection of medieval and Renaissance instruments used to torture the occupants of the underworld. It’s an ornate and gleefully literal representation of human suffering. Several of the poor souls hold their hands over their ears as if to block out painful sounds.

Such a ghastly display did little to deter Lamb, however, who decided a more melodious noise might result from three-dimensional imitations of the painted instruments. He and his team duly went about recreating instruments based on the Bosch designs, ready to unveil to the public last year. Despite his confidence that the images were intended as faithful representations, the models turned out to be fatally flawed.

“I tried to coax a few harmonious notes out of the wind instruments,” he told the Oxford University website. “But the racket that comes out of them is horrible. We were hoping to create a three-dimensional exhibition in which visitors to the Museum could see replicas and hear them play haunting melodies, but we have had to accept defeat.”

Among the torturous creations were a hurdy-gurdy with wrongly positioned strings, making it difficult to hold and resulting in “a half-hearted buzzing noise”, a coiled trumpet lacking a harmonic series, a harp unable to make an octave, a “strangely proportioned” shawm and a lute which collapsed under the strain of tuning.

Even allowing for the painting’s more “surreal elements”, Lamb was surprised by the poor results. “The attention to detail in Bosch’s stunning triptych is otherwise remarkable,” he insisted. Yet, he conceded, “it does make sense – musical instruments are very specifically designed, so artists can be forgiven for drawing what they think they see.”

Determined to create some usable sounds, Lamb teamed up with student Richard MacKenzie to record works on the shawm and lute and their heroic efforts were rewarded with recognisable results. As Lamb has since explained, “The instruments could not be ‘exact’ copies of those in the picture as it is two-dimensional and gives no guidance as to many of the subtle design features that would render the instruments playable.”

QUIZ

Who am I?

Pit your wits against Gramophone

Every instrument has its iconic makers - and what Stradivari is to violins I am often said to be to guitars.

The analogy isn't quite correct, however. Whereas Strad violins improve with age, this isn't always true of guitars, so you're unlikely to hear one of my instruments on the concert stage (though more than 150 are known to survive).

My greatest legacy for the modern player is that my innovations greatly changed the guitar, creating the basis of the instrument we have today.

Born in Spain, I became an apprentice carpenter at the age of 12. It was not until a

good two decades had passed that guitar-making became my profession; in the later 1850s I won a prize, albeit bronze, for one of my instruments in an exhibition. Major virtuosos who used my instruments, including the great Tárrega, subsequently helped spread my reputation.

My developments focused on the soundboard - I expanded the size of the instrument and made the soundboard thinner and supported it by a system of fan-bracing (I didn't invent this but I did perfect it).

To prove my point about the importance of the soundboard, I once made a guitar with papier-mâché back and sides, which you can still see in Barcelona.

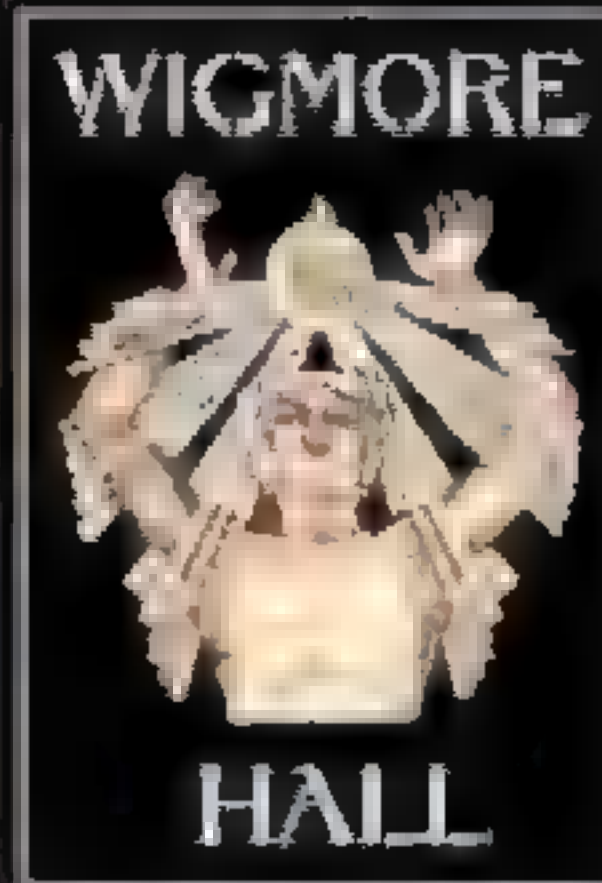


Francisco Tárrega was a notable player of my instruments; (above) one of my guitars, from 1855

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MARCH ISSUE WINNER The mystery composer was **Tōru Takemitsu**. The first correct answer came from Dr Bruce A McDonald of Fort Worth, Texas, who wins a selection of CDs.



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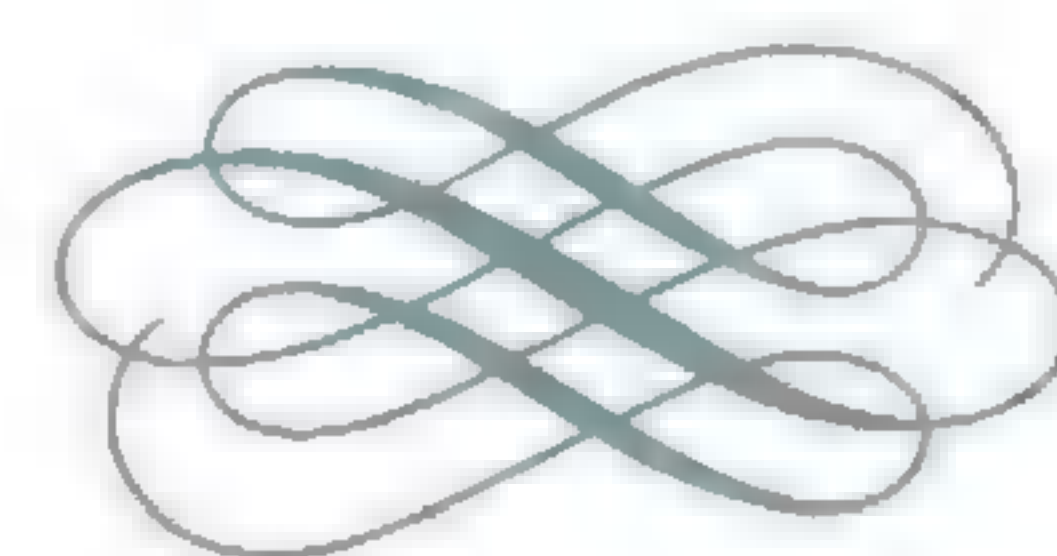
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PASSING THE BATON

Thirty-six-year-old Yannick Nézel-Séguin leads the pack, as Gramophone - helped by some of today's most renowned conductors - names the 10 young maestros who will shape our listening.

Yannick Nézel-Séguin photographed for Gramophone
by Larry Ford at Wilfred-Pelletier Hall, Montréal

The approachable maestro:
Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Turn back the clock 20 years. Where were the great conductors of today in 1991? Riccardo Chailly (37) newly appointed to the top job in Amsterdam; Simon Rattle (35) still in Birmingham; Valery Gergiev (37) hardly known in the West; Antonio Pappano (32) not yet on the radar; Esa-Pekka Salonen (33) a year from taking over the LAPO; and Semyon Bychkov (38) in the midst of his rather unhappy tenure in Paris. So who are the Chaillys and Rattles of tomorrow?

We're living in an age of extraordinary conducting talent, an era in which orchestras prize raw brilliance above experience. It has clearly worked in Los Angeles, where Gustavo Dudamel (30) has become a virtual life-force, and all over the world conductors in their twenties and thirties have stepped into jobs that would traditionally have been occupied by men in their forties and older.

In fact, with so many young maestros popping up on podiums of note, it can be hard to tell who will be tomorrow's Abbados and who, well, tomorrow's Loris Tjeknavorians. In other words, hyped to the heavens one minute and subsequently, let us say, having less than the glittering career that was promised. So, hype firmly put to one side, *Gramophone* has chosen 10 under-forties whom we believe will be acknowledged as the true greats of the future and most likely running major orchestras within the next half-decade or so.

Some don't have to wait that long. Ahead of the pack (we don't include Gustavo Dudamel, who is so far beyond them in terms of career development that he's a mere pinprick on their collective horizon) is Yannick Nézet-Séguin (36), one of the most sought-after conductors of the younger generation. Soon to take over the Philadelphia Orchestra, one of the indisputably "major league" American bands, he already runs the Rotterdam Philharmonic and the Orchestre Métropolitain of Montreal, as well as being principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic.

Interviewed by James Jolly, he leads our podium princes to open up about the practicalities and (modest) predicaments of being a budding star conductor in today's music world...



YESTERDAYS PROTÉGÉS
A pre-LA Phil Esa-Pekka
Salonen in 1986



Knowing what to call conductors face-to-face has always been by far the most nerve-racking element in interviewing them. "Maestro", for all but eminent Italians, seems dangerously ego-massaging in a profession not famed for its perspective (or sense of irony); British knights have the get-out of a gentle familiarity within a formal structure; but the majority of them provide the dilemma of first name being too chummy and "Mr X" sounding too much like a confrontation with the bank manager. With the French-Canadian Yannick Nézet-Séguin, there's no confusion. This boyish, enthusiastic young conductor is so friendly that anything other than Yannick would be just wrong. And I suspect that over the past few years "Yannick?", addressed in a slightly pleading way, followed by a hasty brandishing of the diary, is a familiar mode of address. Yannick Nézet-Séguin has, in a very short time, become one of the hottest properties in the conducting world.

At the start of June he assumes the title of music director designate of the Philadelphia Orchestra, joining a lineage that includes Leopold Stokowski, Eugene Ormandy, Riccardo Muti, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Christoph Eschenbach. And that post crowns his other appointments: music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and artistic director of the Orchestre Métropolitain of Montreal. He's a man orchestras want to work with.

Until very recently every conducting debut must have been something like a date, with the peal of wedding bells a real possibility. "Yes, it's true. Many of the orchestras I've visited in my recent history were at some point in need of a music director or engaged in a search for one. It's like any corporation or major company. It's always good to think of the future and even very traditional orchestras who have long-term music directors – even if it's not for now – have to cultivate relationships with younger conductors so that eventually, 10 or 20 years down the road, there might be a close association. It's true: it adds to the huge pressure of meeting an orchestra for the first time." But he's clearly a "good date" and, if rumour be true, it was love at first sight when he made his debut at New York's Met a couple of years ago.

Nézet-Séguin's passion for his work is rewarded by passion from his players. Tim Walker, chief executive and artistic director of the

LPO, explained that as soon as he watched Yannick rehearse the Toronto Symphony back in March 2004 he knew he wanted to work with him. "I didn't even speak to him then. I sat in the stalls for maybe 20 minutes and I was immediately struck by his energy, his manner, the way he treated the musicians and the music. He had such a bright and engaging personality." And ever since their first concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the relationship between the conductor and the LPO has deepened. He's just taken them on tour to Germany, and their plans together stretch way into the future, with more tours and a swathe of concerts that will bring us Haydn, Richard Strauss, Bartók and Poulenc, as well as concertos with Anne-Sophie Mutter in 2013. Yannick's a perfect foil to the LPO's principal conductor, Vladimir Jurowski, whose passion is for the musical byways: it works well, with the younger conductor exploring the core repertoire and drawing a quite different sound from the orchestra. And, of course, he brings something very special to French repertoire.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin was born and raised in Montreal – he speaks with that charming blend of French and American accents – and very soon showed extraordinary promise as a pianist. First stop as a conductor

'In a very short time he'd ascended into conducting's premier league'

was at the helm of the Chœur Polyphonique de Montréal, and very soon with the Chœur de Laval too. He became artistic director of the Orchestre Métropolitain in 2000 and has built up quite a discography for ATMA with them (his contract has been extended to 2015, though his appearances are confined to just four periods each year). Very soon all the major orchestras were calling and debuts with the LPO, SCO, BPO, Staatskapelle Dresden, the Met, Covent Garden and Salzburg followed. In a very short time he'd ascended into conducting's premier league.

Being a Canadian, Nézet-Séguin has huge advantages, as there are no particularly deep musical roots tapping into specific repertoires. "As a Canadian it's a question I've had to ask myself often, because where do I fit in? Of course we do have some Canadian music but it's very recent and it's not part of my blood. But then, I think I'd be very intimidated if I felt I had to have a particular composer 'in my blood'. If that was the case, I'd never do any Bruckner, never do any Shostakovich." As it is, his musical sympathies are remarkably broad – including that favourite of his, the just-mentioned Bruckner...

As Nézet-Séguin studied with Carlo Maria Giulini, I assumed that that was where the passion for Bruckner started. "Funnily enough, we never worked on Bruckner!" Yannick laughs. "Schubert, Brahms,



TOMORROW'S ICONS *Lionel Bringuier*

Age 24

Born Nice, France

Current jobs Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León (music director), Los Angeles Philharmonic (associate conductor)

What marks him out Great clarity of thought, transmits complex symphonic ideas to musicians with seeming ease – and incredible charisma for a 24-year-old!

Recording to have D'Indy's *Symphonie italienne*, Orchestre de Bretagne, Timpani 1C1125

~

"After a long conversation we had, touching on almost all subjects concerning not only the interpretation of works but the organisation itself of musical institutions, I had the impression of dealing not only with a personality whose talents are obvious but also with a character who is capable of having a vision and deciding to realise it. It is rare among those in musical life to find individuals who are, to use the language of Alban Berg, prepared to consider music of their time as 'classical' and 'classical' music as belonging to our time."

Pierre Boulez

~

YESTERDAYS PROTÉGÉS
Valery Gergiev, student,
competing in a Moscow
competition (he won)





TOMORROW'S ICONS *Robin Ticciati*

Age 27

Born London, England

Current jobs Scottish Chamber Orchestra (principal conductor), Bamberg Symphony (principal guest conductor)

What marks him out Colour, balance, pacing

Recording to have Music by Brahms, Bamberg SO, Tudor TUDOR7167

"I first met Robin when he was in the National Youth Orchestra and playing the timps, and later he came to talk about how to conduct, as though it's possible to teach it; it isn't really, but we talked about music a lot, and how you get the results that you want, and I've seen him regularly for the last two or three years. He's a very gifted young man and he takes his task extremely seriously at the same time as getting a great joy out of music. That's what really counts most. And he's more interested in the music than in his own ego, and if you concentrate on the music, the musicians will go with you. If you're trying to exploit the music to make a big scene, they won't much like it."

Sir Colin Davis



TOMORROW'S ICONS *Andris Nelsons*

Age 32

Born Riga, Latvia

Current jobs City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (music director)

What marks him out An ear for illuminating detail, has restored glory to the post-Rattle CBSO

Recording to have Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, CBSO, Orfeo C832 101A

"When Andris was a young trumpet player in Riga, and when the Oslo Philharmonic toured to Riga, my trumpeter was sick and he stood in at the last minute. We offered him a fee but he declined and asked to sit in on my rehearsals instead. So he started coming to my rehearsals, in several cities, sitting with the score. One day he showed me a video of him conducting and I could see that he is a real conductor. After that I started giving him lessons and introduced him to managers and musicians, and because he's such a nice and modest person they all liked him. But, most important, he has the real conductor's gift. That comes from nature and means he can be a very fine conductor indeed."

Mariss Jansons



TOMORROW'S ICONS *Edward Gardner*

Age 36

Born London, England

Current jobs English National Opera (music director)

What marks him out Huge energy in his conducting, with structures logically and powerfully built

Recording to have Lutoslawski orchestral works, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chandos CHSA5082

"He was the last candidate for my first series of auditions in Manchester for an assistant conductorship at the Hallé Orchestra. I couldn't find him for ages. He'd turned up and hidden at the back of the hall, he was so nervous. During his audition it quickly became clear to me that he was the one I wanted to help, because he had good ears and the right attitude, and what he didn't know he was clearly going to learn. He's propelled by an amazing brain and a determination to find the right way. It's very hard when you're young to be so centred and not to worry about whether the orchestra hate you. He's progressing very excitingly."

Sir Mark Elder



ZELENKA Officium defunctorum, Requiem
Collegium 1704 & Collegium Vocale 1704, Vaclav Luks
ACC 24244

E
EDITOR'S CHOICE
RECORDING OF THE MONTH



SCHMITT La Tragedie de Salome, **FRANCK** Symphonie en Ré
Orchestre Métropolitain, Yannick Nézet-Séguin
ACD2 2647

E
EDITOR'S CHOICE



ROMANIAN RHAPSODY
Mihaela Ursuleasa
Featuring Gilles Apap
BC 0016542



PIANO & FORTE
Mihaela Ursuleasa
BC 0016642

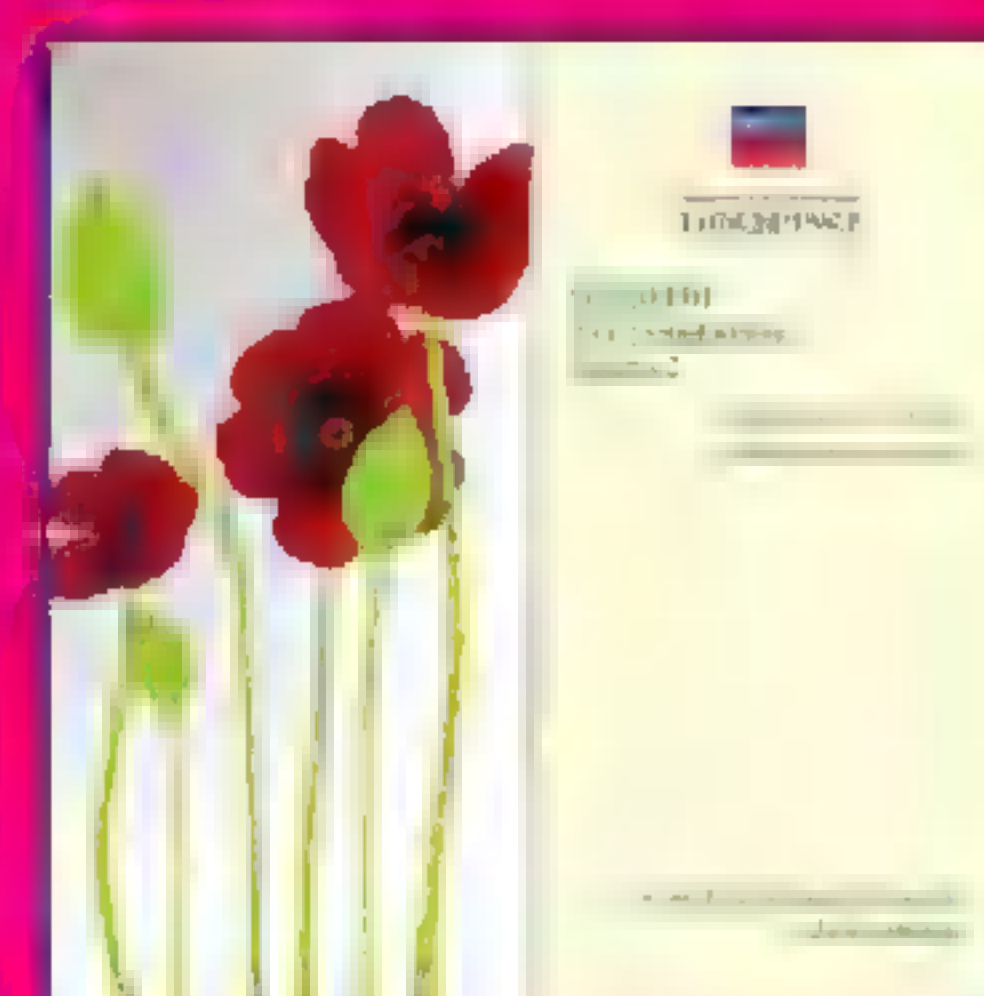
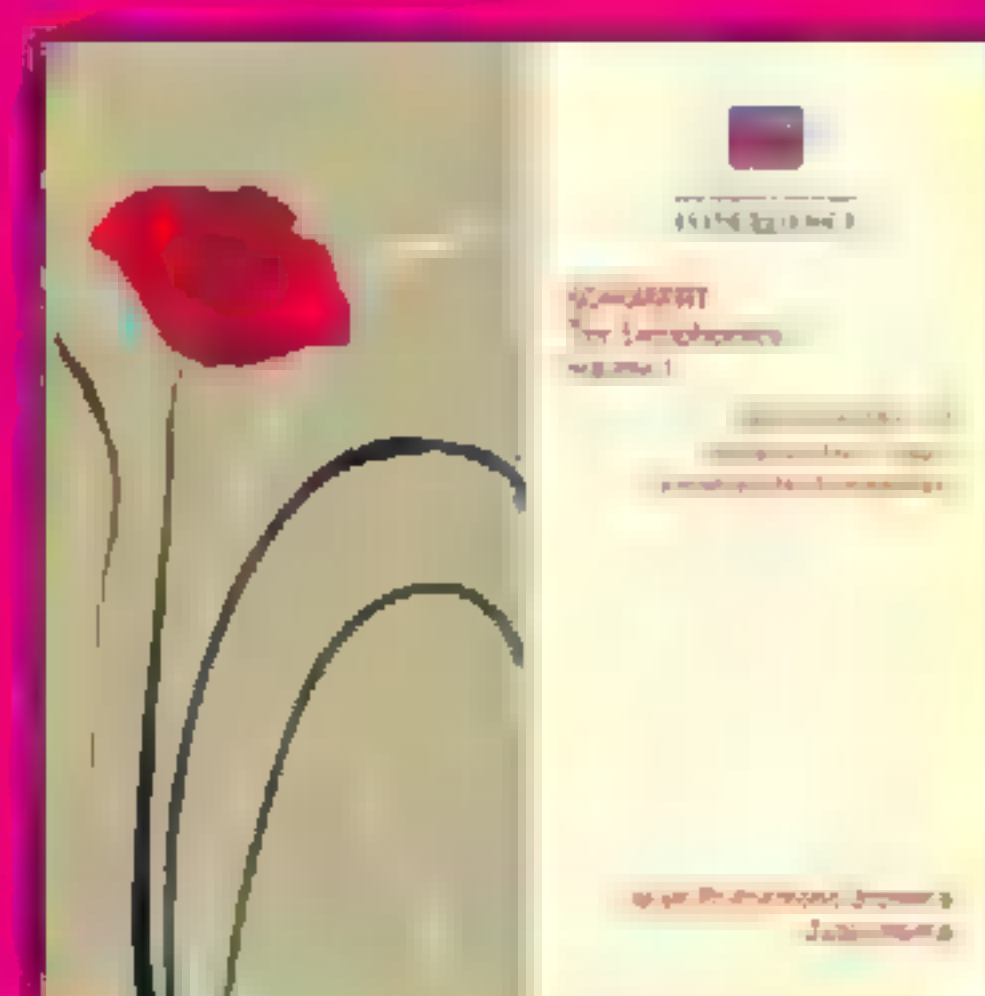
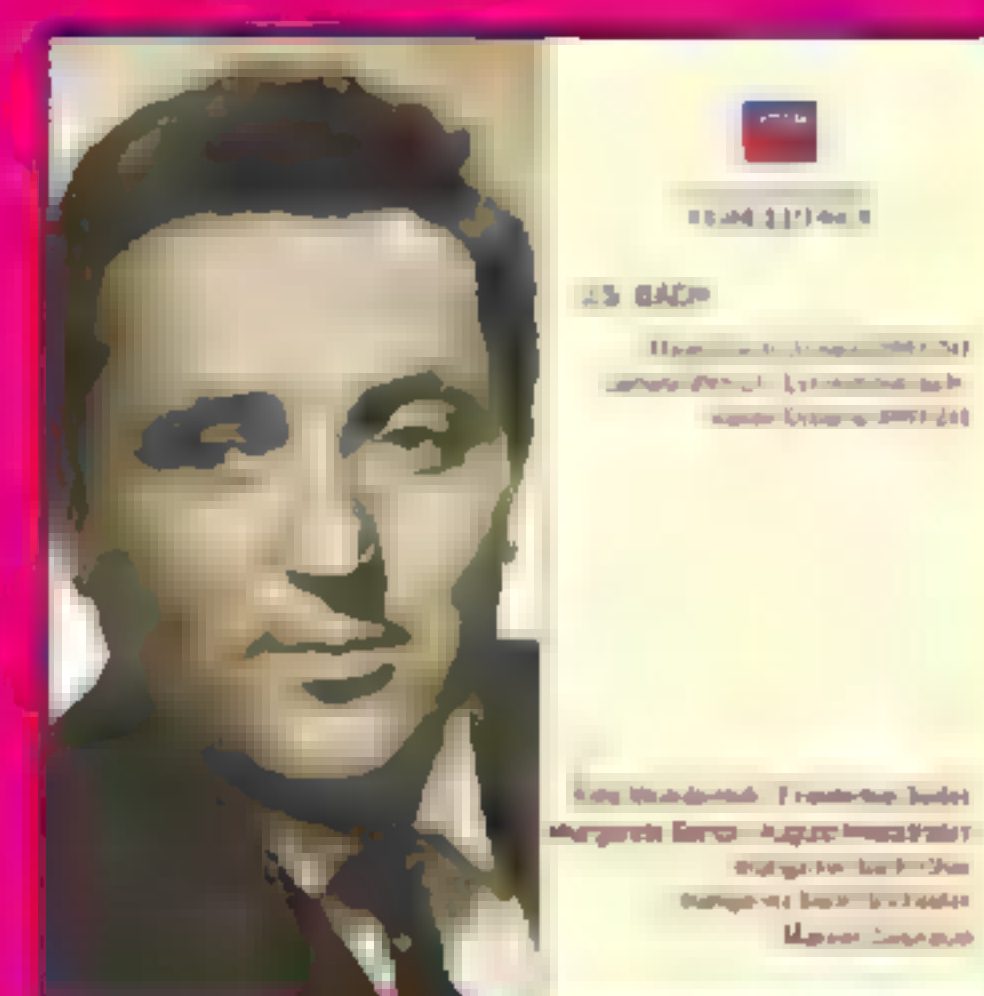
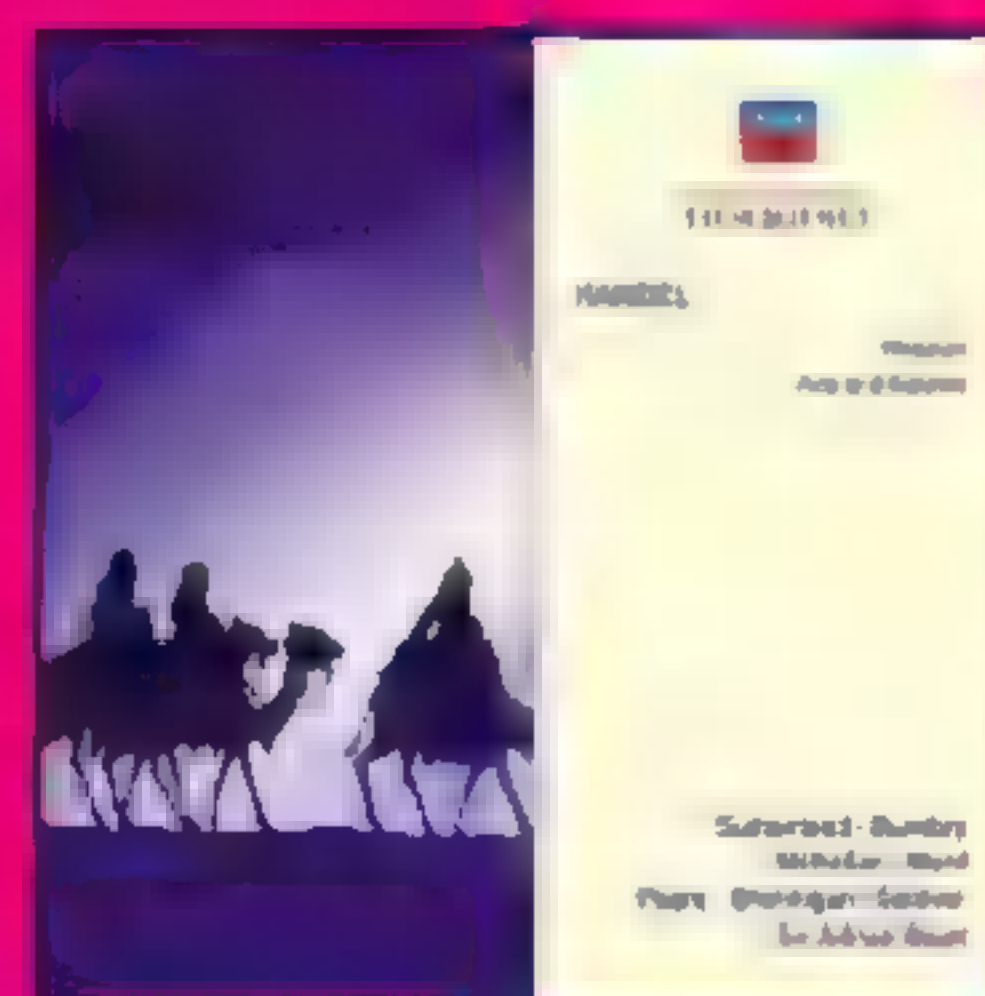
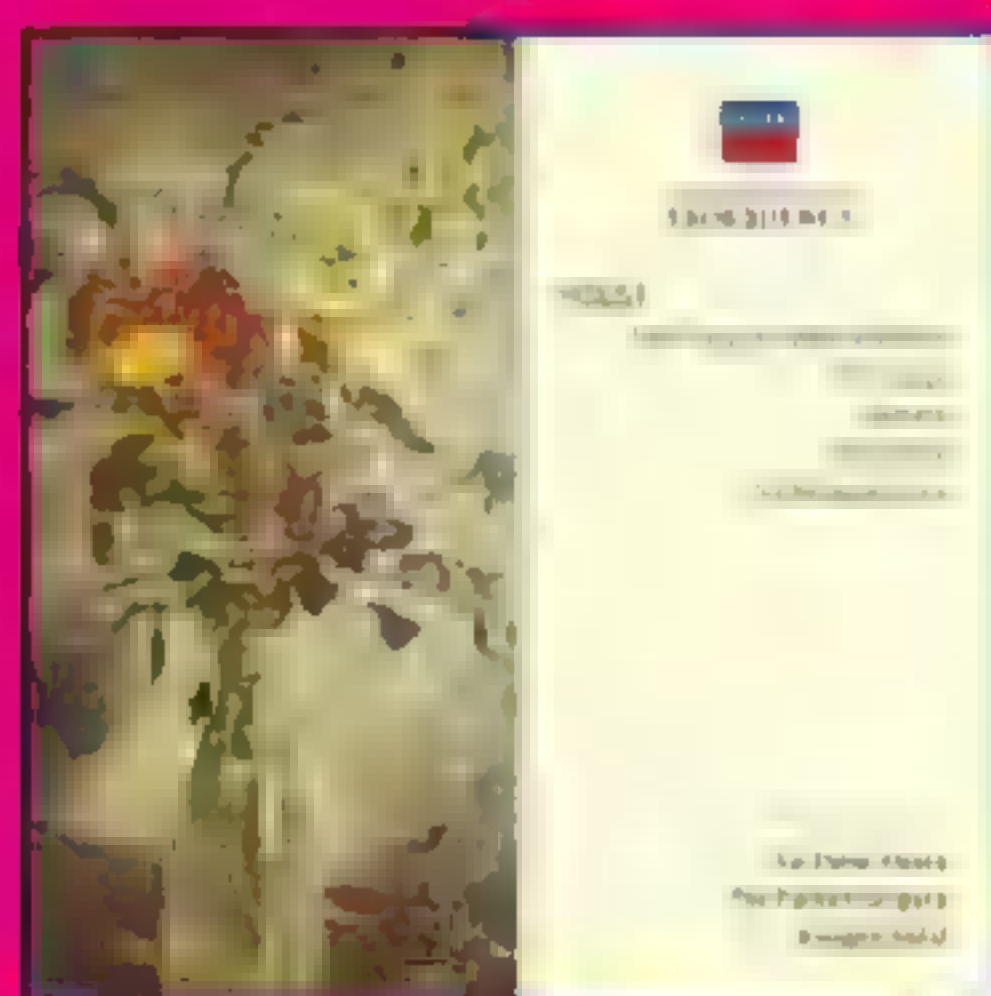
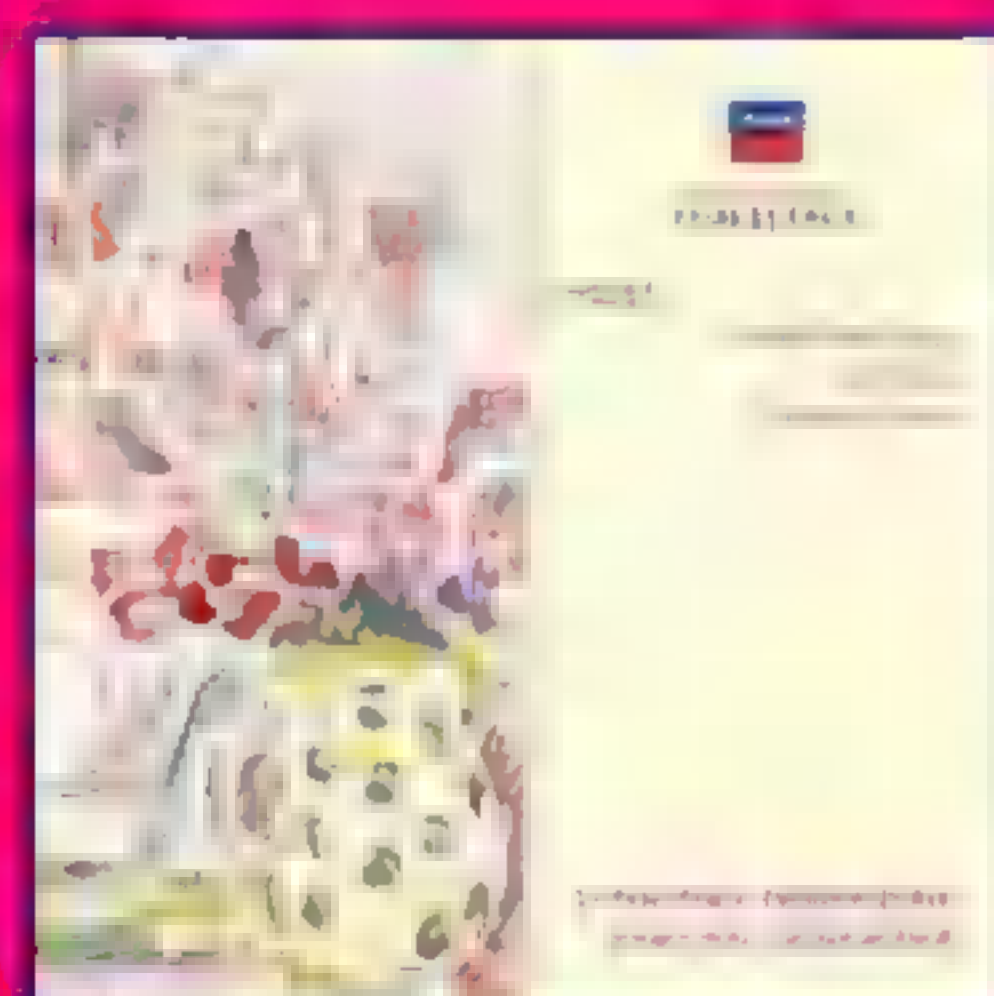


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New York Times





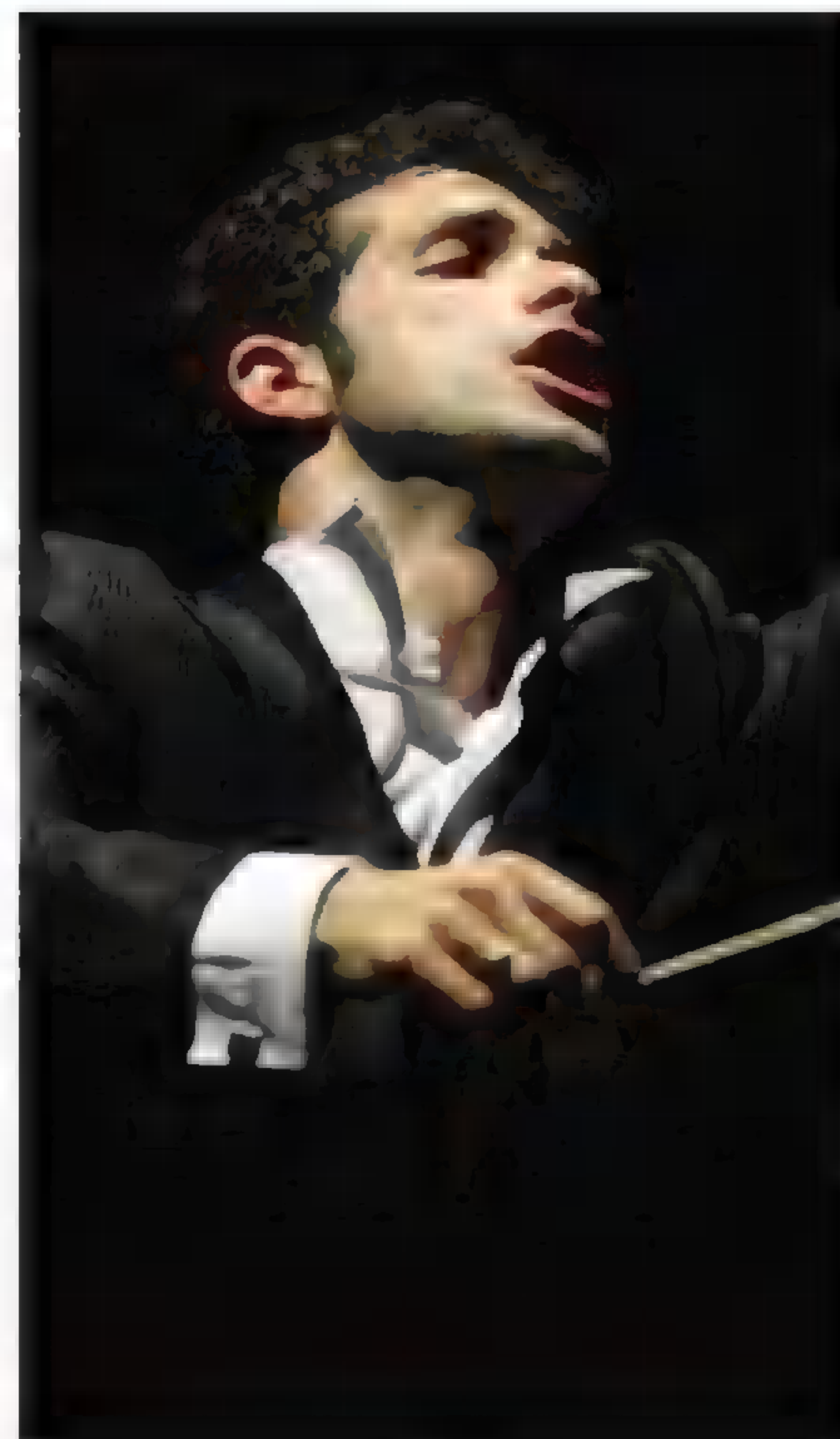
Mozart, Verdi, Schumann but never Bruckner. And yet his Bruckner Ninth with the Vienna Phil for me...well, there's just nothing like it: as an orchestral recording it's up there with *Das Lied von der Erde* with Bruno Walter and Rudolf Kempe's Strauss."

So where did this enthusiasm come from? "Well, the first time I heard Bruckner was a recording of the Fourth – I hesitate to name who it was conducting because I hated it. Looking back, I don't think it's a bad recording at all but it probably wasn't the right one with which to be introduced to Bruckner. I was 15, I think, and I remember telling my piano teachers that this was rubbish with too much brass. I couldn't understand where it was going, it was too square. But when I heard Skrowaczewski conducting the Montreal Symphony live – the Ninth Symphony – in a church in Montreal, that's when I changed completely. I was converted on the spot and from that moment I dreamt of conducting Bruckner. So it was just the impact of a great concert. Of course, as a piano student, I couldn't cultivate this. As a choral conductor I could slightly, with some motets and so on, but, as soon as I could, I programmed Bruckner No 9 as my first symphony."

Bruckner will no doubt feature on his Philadelphia programmes, something that will be intriguing, given the orchestra's relative reticence in that repertoire. "Well, they did it with Sawallisch, but it's not really documented. But the orchestra play it beautifully, so we will certainly do a lot. And that's good, because the sound of the strings and the very particular brass sound can be a huge asset in that repertoire. There's much stuff to explore so it's not always doing the same, same, same pieces that they've been doing for years – and recording with Ormandy, Stokowski and even with Muti. For example, I won't do so much French music there – they like it and they play it beautifully, and Dutoit is doing a lot of it, and of course this is a big part of my musical self. But when I arrived in Rotterdam I started to draw out those colours that they had developed with Gergiev in Russian music and apply them to French repertoire." And their EMI disc of Ravel proves just how successful this has been.

Given the demands on his time and the no-doubt dizzying offers he must receive, Yannick remains remarkably down-to-earth. His passion for music is palpable but it's immediately obvious that he remains firmly planted in the realms of reality and is more than aware of the challenges of leading a major orchestra (or two) in these cash-strapped times. "It's concerning always, because one feels that there's a certain missionary role we have to undertake to convince and seduce people back to why an orchestra matters. But I'm optimistic that what we have to offer in our so-called concert music is so different from anything else. And actually it does meet some needs which perhaps some generations even younger than we might expect

YESTERDAYS PROTÉGÉS
A 24 year-old Simon Rattle
in rehearsal, 1979



TOMORROW'S ICONS *Omer Meir Wellber*

Age 29

Born Beersheba, Israel

Current jobs Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia (music director), Raanana Symphony Orchestra (resident conductor)

What marks him out Can marshal impressive force in his orchestras, sense of a real vision developing

Recording to have Has yet to make his recording debut

"Omer auditioned for me in Berlin and I told him that he was obviously very talented and had a wonderful natural feel for the music but there were many things that he needed to learn. He couldn't yet control the orchestra, didn't know how to effectively balance his forces while scaling up or down the tensions. But he wouldn't take no for an answer, and gave up all his work in Israel to come and study with me. He has an open mind, he is bright, he thinks about many things outside of music rather than living in an ivory tower, and he has much potential."

Daniel Barenboim



Hear recordings from some of these exciting young conductors via Gramophone Player at www.gramophone.co.uk



TOMORROW'S ICONS

Jakub Hrůša

Age 29

Born Brno, Czech Republic

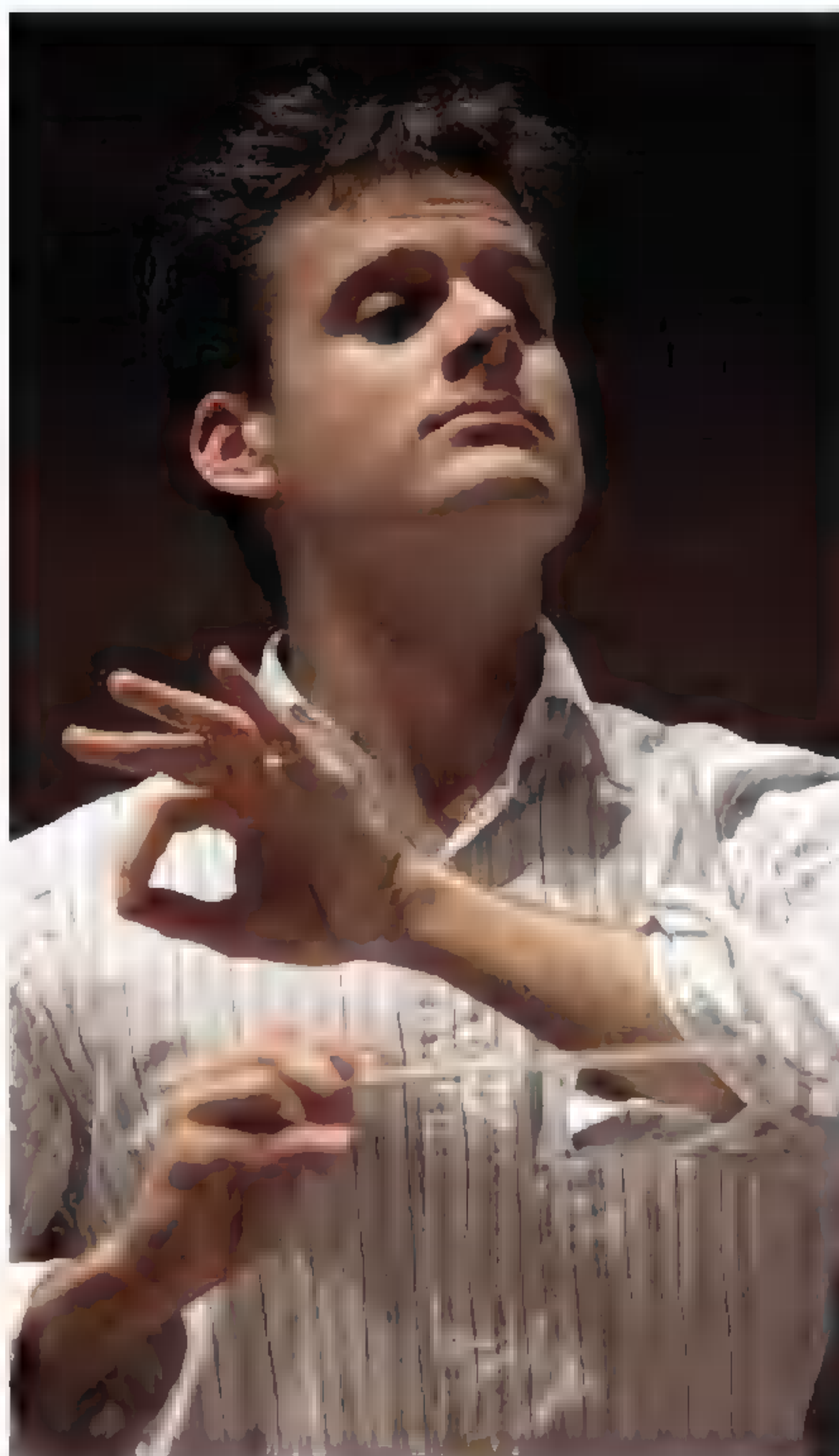
Current jobs Prague Philharmonia (music director and chief conductor), Glyndebourne On Tour (music director), Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (principal guest conductor)

What marks him out Creates effervescent orchestral textures and his conducting crackles with energy

Recording to have Smetana's *Má vlast*, Prague Philh, Supraphon SU4032-2

~
"Jakub Hrůša is an exceptionally gifted musician, a conductor with deep insight into musical matters and a remarkably developed ability to communicate his ideas both to orchestras and to listeners. His broad knowledge combined with his range of interests allow him to grasp easily a wide repertoire in an extensive range of musical styles. His sincerity and humane attitude towards every aspect of both life and art make him a most interesting and engaging personality."

Jiří Bělohlávek



TOMORROW'S ICONS

Philippe Jordan

Age 36

Born Zürich, Switzerland

Current jobs Opéra National de Paris (music director), Berlin Staatsoper (principal guest conductor)

What marks him out Thoughtful, weightily powerful interpretations

Recording to have Richard Strauss's *Salome*, Royal Opera House, Opus Arte **DVD** OA0996D

~
"When Philippe's father, the conductor Armin Jordan, asked me to take on his son as my assistant, I did not hesitate because of my enormous admiration for Armin. I remember Philippe as a tall, shy young man playing the score with finesse and great musicality, seemingly modest but at moments revealing an iron will. It was clear to me that this boy would develop in an extraordinary manner and, listening to the praise of the singers after a *Fliegende Holländer* he took over for me in Rome, I knew that a career on the highest level was about to begin. I am delighted for him and delighted to find that, although he is less shy, he has not lost his modesty."

Jeffrey Tate



TOMORROW'S ICONS

Vasily Petrenko

Age 34

Born Moscow, Russia

Current jobs Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (chief conductor), Oslo Philharmonic (chief conductor designate), National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (principal conductor)

What marks him out Brilliant orchestra-builder; thanks to his Russian training he teaches every musician to think like a soloist

Recording to have Shostakovich's Symphony No 10, RLPO, Naxos 8 572461

~
"My first encounter with Vasily was when he won the conducting competition in Barcelona so easily. His command of both the music and the musicians was so overwhelmingly triumphant that both the players and the jury were unanimous in their final judgement. His performance at last year's Promenade concert with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra revealed his extraordinary ability to lead a good orchestra to greatness."

Sir Neville Marriner



TOMORROW'S ICONS *Diego Matheuz*

Age 26

Born Barquisimeto, Venezuela

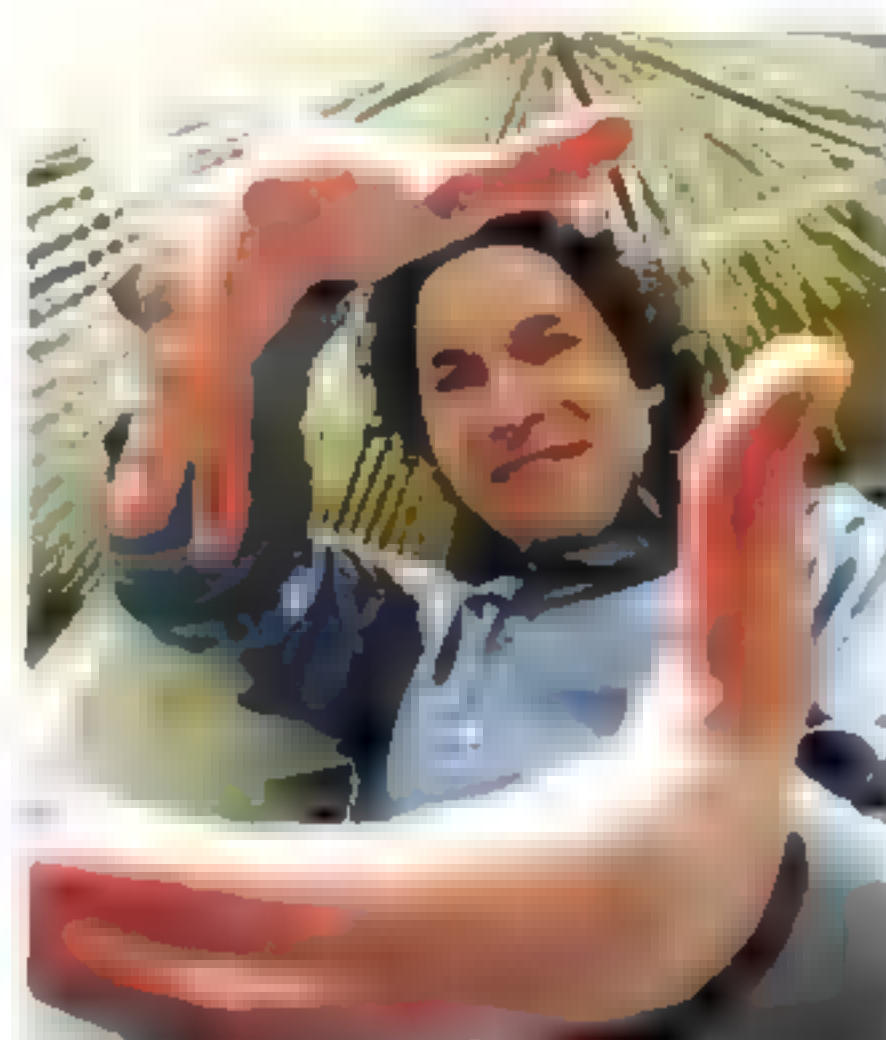
Current jobs Orchestra Mozart of Bologna (principal guest conductor), Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra (concertmaster)

What marks him out An almost sensual feeling for the moods and contours of the music

Recording to have Yet to make his recording debut

“Diego Matheuz is one of the most notable talents of the new generation, for which reason I invited him to be principal guest conductor of my Mozart Orchestra. Recently he conducted his first opera, Verdi’s *Otello*, in Venice and Reggio Emilia, with great success. He is conducting concerts in the most important halls of the world, in the footsteps of Gustavo Dudamel, his great friend. They both studied in Venezuela within the famous Sistema. I strongly believe in Diego’s talent. Notwithstanding his young age, he has great sensitivity and musical versatility, and he is always ready to bring great radiance and creative freshness to the music.”

Claudio Abbado



Gustavo Dudamel

Gramophone introduced Dudamel to British readers in August 2006 as part of our survey of “Tomorrow’s Classical Superstars”. We knew he was bound for great things: he’d just been picked as chief of the Gothenburg SO and was already signed to DG. “What makes Gustavo so special,” wrote Daniel Barenboim in that issue, “is that he knows everything one cannot learn about music.” And that knowledge has led to the music directorship of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and a sequence of unforgettable appearances. Already a superstar, it is hard to believe he’s still only 30!

will gather massively from. Opera has no problem: it’s healthy. Opera houses may say otherwise but there’s a huge audience.” And when I ask him about having to plan so far in advance – what if he reaches a particular evening in 2014 and doesn’t feel like conducting Mahler’s Sixth? – he calmly points out that there are people in this world with rather more troubling problems: like where to get their next meal. It’s a remarkably un-conductor-like response.

As for contemporary repertoire, he offers a solution that must be music to today’s composers’ ears. “What happened is that there were a lot of commissions which had to do with the opening of Verizon Hall. My first intention is to try to give some new life to those pieces. So I want to see what the orchestra commissioned and performed over the years (and that’ll go back a long time) and revive some of those works. It’s part of the history of Philadelphia. Ten years ago you heard that piece, 10 years later let’s see how it has stood the test of time, and 20 years, and so on – let’s try and create new classics this way.”

Why, I wonder, don’t the major orchestras – say, the US’s Big Five – pool their commissions and say to each other, “We rate this one.

I want to see what the orchestra commissioned over the years and revive some of those works’

Why don’t you try it?” rather than consign a work to history after just one or two box-ticking performances? “I agree. It happens occasionally but not generally. For example, I shall be doing Jennifer Higdon’s Concerto for Orchestra next season – it was a work commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra yet recorded by the Atlanta Symphony and Robert Spano. And we’ll play it again in Philadelphia and hopefully I’ll bring it this side of the Atlantic too.”

The Philadelphia Orchestra, with its illustrious heritage dating back to 1900, had fallen into one of the traps set for many of the so-called Big Five (and plenty of the ensembles in the next layer down): complacency. “Many orchestras just sat there knowing that this family and that family would give zillions of dollars and everything would be fine, and not wanting to nurture the next generation or try to be relevant to different social categories of the city. And that’s precisely what happened in Philadelphia. Not in five years, but over perhaps 30 years. There was this ‘We are the Philadelphia Orchestra and we’re so good and everything’s great and people will come to see us anyway’. It’s true. And it’s not that they said we’re good and they weren’t, because they remained good. But if you don’t do the sort of work that says ‘Look, it’s for you; it’s not just for those established families,’ then once that family stops giving, or someone dies, all of a sudden there’s a big problem. So now we have to out-reach, we have to be welcoming and inviting to a wide spectrum of audiences and age groups. It’s a good thing because what we will get is a more sustainable audience in a few years’ time. I hope it will bring people who genuinely love music back into the concert halls. It’s a big subject with no easy answers. But I’m optimistic.”

Philadelphia is a perfect fit for Yannick. It has a heritage second to none and it’s always been at the cutting edge. “When I look at the orchestra’s history, this was a premiere orchestra: it was the first to perform so many works on that side of the Atlantic; the first to tour to the Far East; the first orchestra to have a really up-to-date, technological way of recording. Stokowski would do crazy things like having the shell painted in different colours to go with the music. He was really very visionary – these are all things you see in pop and rock concerts today. So we ought to continue to be visionary in order to be traditional! When I take over officially it’ll be exactly 100 years after Stokowski arrived so our plans are very linked to revisiting his legacy and how to make it relevant 100 years later. That’s very much our vision.”



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...BUT WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Absent from our Top 10, women are continuing to forge their own path in the cut-throat world of conducting – but not fast enough, argues **Charlotte Gardner**

It seems wrong, in this day and age, to be still writing articles specifically about women conductors. As far back as 1890, Juliette Folville conducted her own work with the Concertgebouw. Today, over two decades after Sian Edwards and Jane Glover became the first women to conduct at Covent Garden, the proverbial glass ceiling should be well and truly smashed.

Instead, here we are with an all-male Top 10, few women in top conductor posts worldwide, and none in Britain since Marin Alsop left Bournemouth for Baltimore in 2007. Furthermore, the established top female conductors such as Alsop, Glover and Simone Young are now in their fifties and sixties. Are we going backwards?

In fact, the answer is no. Some highly talented female conductors are now emerging. What's more, while in the past there might have been just one or two women per generation, this time it's a sizeable clutch. The past three years have seen the appointments of Great Britain's first ever female assistant conductors: 34-year-old Ewa Strusińska with the Hallé until last year, and 32-year-old Jessica Cottis with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Other rising female thirties-somethings include Anu Tali (founder and music director of the Nordic Symphony Orchestra), Xian Zhang (music director of the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi), Shi-Yeon Sung (associate conductor of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra), and Alondra de la Parra (founder and artistic director of the New York-based Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas – visit www.gramophone.co.uk for a related feature). As for the older generation, Jane Glover herself has just broken through a fresh glass ceiling, having been asked to conduct the Metropolitan Opera for the first time. "I'm thrilled about it," she says. "It hasn't happened for many women. I think I'll only be the third ever."

Even so, Glover believes some of the initial resistances remain. As she says revealingly, "I have on a couple of occasions been told, 'Oh, they'll never hire you there because you're the wrong gender'."

Could such resistance, albeit in pocketed areas, explain why there isn't already a middle generation of top female conductors, sitting in



between Cottis, Strusińska and their contemporaries, and the likes of Glover, Alsop and Young? Cottis believes that it's not necessarily yet the case that there isn't. She points out that "many conductors don't reach their peak until much later in their lives". That said, she can see inequality elsewhere. She certainly doesn't think that the current crop of young male conductors in top posts are necessarily better than their female contemporaries. "It's difficult to say why there's this idolatry of male youth," she says, "but you see some of them advertised as football heroes, and it's difficult to advertise women in the same way."

Both Glover and Cottis talk admiringly of the Taki Concordia Conducting Fellowship,

founded by Marin Alsop, which provides grants, mentoring and performance opportunities for talented women conductors. As Cottis explains, "I still think we're at the stage where positive enforcement, good role models and an ability to practise our craft in a non-threatening environment in front of somebody who has worked really hard to be one of the top conductors is hugely important".

It's especially so, considering females sometimes have extra skills to master. Firstly, vocal timbre. "Women often don't have as strong voices as men," says Glover, "meaning you can sound either wimpish or bossy, particularly the larger the space or bigger the forces. You

do have to raise your voice, and it's hard to not seem strident." Then there's the female physique. "If Leif Segerstam stands up, he gets a wonderful, rich, chocolatey sound just on account of his size," observes Cottis.

"For me to get that sound as a more slight

person, there's a process of developing conducting from the real core of myself, to feel the inner weight and strength. Often it's not strictly visible to an outsider, but it's a feeling and the players really sense it."

What everybody senses is that it won't be long before articles such as this are irrelevant. "It's a case of waiting for the young female conductors who are currently working their way through the system," says Cottis. "In 10 years' time, I really do think there will be more female conductors in leading roles in orchestras and opera houses. Then, I think it will potentially be the next generation, today's teenagers, who will have a completely equal playing field." ■

'There's this idolatry of male youth – you see them advertised as football heroes'

Love, composed on The wing

With just months to write his song-cycle for The Prince Consort, Stephen Hough composed in hotels, on planes and backstage. The results, reflecting Brahms and alternative love, are a delight, finds **Jeremy Nicholas**

Sharon Osbourne didn't like what she heard. Not one little bit. Thanks to her, The Prince Consort were bundled out of the bar of the Dorchester hotel at last year's *Gramophone* Awards. How a world premiere was nearly scuppered is now the stuff of legend.

To be fair to the feisty erstwhile judge of *The X Factor*, the music being rehearsed was not quite right for cocktail hour. The song, a setting of AE Housman's "The colour of his hair", demands blood-curdling off-beat thumps of the keyboard played with the fists and marked *ffff*. Ms Osbourne summoned the manager, made some colourful remarks about the music, and the rehearsal was curtailed immediately. "I was really worried that she'd think we'd asked to be there so we could get on *The X Factor* or something," grins Alisdair Hogarth, artistic director and pianist of The Prince Consort.

They had been rehearsing two numbers from a new song-cycle by Stephen Hough completed only weeks beforehand. Jennifer Johnston, the group's mezzo-soprano, explains diplomatically: "We got to the Dorchester but found that the room we had been given to rehearse had been taken over as a press studio. So the manager of the hotel took us through to the bar of the Dorchester where people were quietly drinking their afternoon tea, and it was all too much for a few guests."

Johnston, Hogarth, countertenor Tim Mead and Hough himself are at the Wigmore Hall to talk about the creation and gestation of *Other Love Songs*, the title of Hough's eight song settings for soprano, mezzo, tenor, baritone and piano (three hands) released in June on Linn Records. Mead, gallantly, is on hand despite having only two lines to sing in the cycle (though he is the virtuoso page-turner for "The colour of his hair"). The three other members of The Prince Consort, soprano Anna Leese, tenor Andrew Staples and baritone Jacques Imbrailo, are profitably engaged elsewhere. The Wigmore is an apt venue. All these artists enjoy a strong relationship with the hall (with Hough its incoming artist-in-residence) and it will be here, on June 11, that *Other Love Songs* will receive its official world premiere following a recital by Hough which will include the world premiere of his piano sonata, *Broken Branches*.

This is a golden period of creativity for Hough. How did the idea for the cycle come about and how on earth did he find the time for it?

Hogarth was the catalyst. He wanted the group to make a recording of the two sets of songs Brahms wrote for SATB (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) and piano duet, the 18 *Liebesslieder*, Op 52 (1868-69) and the 15 *Neue Liebesslieder*, Op 65 (1874). "The first Brahms set was written at an upbeat time in his life when he was in love with Robert and Clara Schumann's daughter Julie. Between that and the *Neue Liebesslieder* six years later, Julie went off and married someone else. That's the reason the second set is a lot darker and more disjointed. We thought it would not be a good idea to go from one set to the other. It needed something else in the middle. The easy thing to do is to jam the Schumann *Spanische Liebesslieder* [Op 138, 1849] in between the two. That's a common piece of programming which lots of people have done over the years. It's for piano duet and SATB so it matches the Brahms perfectly. But a lot of what we do in The Prince Consort is

'The one thing you won't find in this song-cycle is a conventional love song, man loves woman. None of that nonsense'

about finding new ways of presenting old pieces. The idea was to commission a piece that would attach to the end of the first Brahms set and to the beginning of the second. We wanted to make a CD that was to be listened to from beginning to end rather than, in this iTunes world, to download your favourite track. It's a journey."

The Consort had worked a lot with Graham Johnson, Roger Vignoles and Malcolm Martineau. Hogarth then had the idea of involving pianists who were better known for their solo endeavours. He contacted his old teacher Philip Fowke, who agreed to a few performances with the group. "Then I phoned up Stephen. He declined, as he had decided to play less chamber music in favour of more composing. But it got me thinking, and out of that conversation came Stephen's song-cycle *Herbstlieder*, which premiered at the Oxford Lieder Festival in 2010." The success of that venture led to this second commission from Hogarth. Instead of using the obvious Schumann, would Hough write a cycle that linked the two sets of Brahms? The



Labour of love (top
from left to right)
Jeremy Nicholas,
Alisdair Hogarth,
Stephen Hough,
Tim Mead and
Jennifer Johnston

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Hough on Housman

'The colour of his hair'
(*AE Housman, set for SATB*)

"I've thought of doing a setting of this for a number of years. It's impossible to read the poem and not be moved by it. Housman writes in this simple way, rather like Claude McKay [1889-1948, the African-American poet, three of whose poems are included in the cycle, who was a member of the New York group of poets in the 1920s known as the Harlem Renaissance]. Yet it's a devastating poem full of righteous anger. And I wanted it to be disturbing. It's about someone, probably Oscar Wilde, being taken to prison because of 'a love that dare not speak its name'. The sea shanty tune is intentionally stupid, cheap and vulgar, like the sentiments of the people involved."

process began last July. "When Alisdair approached me, my first thought was that replacing Schumann was a tall order," recalls Hough. "Then he said they would be recording the CD in October, and I thought, 'Oh good, plenty of time 'til 2011'. Then he said, 'No, actually it's October 2010'! How was I going to write a song-cycle in less than three months? I was leaving for a tour of Singapore, Korea and then on to America. I'd have a lot of time on the plane. Maybe I could find some texts. Well, I did – and started getting some ideas. Then Al asked about linking musically from the end of the first Brahms set to the beginning of the second. So the cycle now starts with the man humming the theme from the final Brahms song of Op 52 before the piano plays a kind of distorted version of it."

Hough is amusingly frank when asked what informed his choice of poems. "I just looked up 'love poems' on the internet. I came up with the last one first – 'Do you love me?', the passage from Chapter 21 of St John's Gospel. When I was in Singapore I sketched the first song [Claude McKay's 'When I have passed away'] and 'Kashmiri Song'. There's an extra verse that Amy Woodforde-Finden didn't use in her famous setting ['Indian Love Lyrics', 1902]." Hough explains insouciantly in the score, "I have used and adapted the traditional Indian Bhairav scale for this setting". "Google again!" he admits now with a triumphant chortle. "I looked up Indian scales and thought, 'Well that one looks rather fun. Adapted, of course'."

All these were sketched and the remaining texts chosen by the time he got to Korea. The first part of "Because I liked you better" (Housman again) was sketched at his hotel; the E major section came to him backstage in the hour before the concert. By the time he left Asia, he had completed most of the songs. In New York, wanting a spirited number to enliven what was in danger of being a collection of slow tempos, he thought of "All shall be well" (Mother Julian of Norwich).

Were they easy to pick up and characterise, I ask Jennifer Johnston. "Yes and no. The poetry is wonderful, very well written so that you can immediately grasp the sense of character, but putting together certain parts [of the music] was naturally more difficult because the harmonies of the duet that Anna and I sing aren't necessarily

The Prince Consort and Stephen Hough worked together previously on another song-cycle, *Herbstlieder*, which was premiered at the Oxford Lieder Festival in 2010

predictable – which is great: like all good music, it's often the stuff that's harder to learn that you end up enjoying the most." It's Johnston who delivers the fourth song, "Madam and her madam" (Langston Hughes), in her native Scouse – to hilarious effect.

Not surprisingly, the three hands of the two pianists have plenty to get their teeth into, but Hough insists that it is not difficult to play. "I never write something that's a struggle to learn, because I don't want to sit all day practising. There are only a couple of passages that are more than Grade Seven, and that's in the second song. And maybe the few brutal moments in 'The colour of his hair'."

Why three hands – and not four to match the Brahms? "The one thing you won't find here is a conventional love song, man loves woman. None of that nonsense," says Hough with a wicked smile. "There are other kinds of love. So you have the two gay-inspired poems ['Because I liked you better' and 'The colour of his hair'] and the lesbian poem ['Kashmiri Song'], so I thought the three hands would be like the 5/4 waltz in Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony. Different love. Different duets. Different texture. Also there is nothing in waltz time in this set – except for a little quote in 'Because I liked you...': a little memory or anticipation of the Brahms."

On the CD, Philip Fowke and Alisdair Hogarth are the pianists in the two Brahms sets, Hough and Hogarth in *Other Love Songs*. Both Hough and Fowke studied with the legendary Gordon Green; Hough and Fowke are longtime friends; Fowke taught Hogarth; Hogarth and the members of The Prince Consort met while studying at the Royal College of Music (on Prince Consort Road, behind the Royal Albert Hall) in London: if not *Liebes Lieder*, then certainly *Freundschaft Lieder*. But don't count on Sharon Osbourne joining in. 🐼



Standing Solo

For most violinists, conquering Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas represents a lifelong journey of interpretative and technical discovery. But who gets closest to the Bachian ideal on record? **Duncan Druce** investigates

The *Sei Solo a Violino senza basso accompagnato* – Bach's own title – are preserved in a beautiful autograph manuscript dated 1720. As with many of his collections, Bach

was aiming at completeness, a thorough survey of the expressive and technical resources of the violin, placing particular emphasis on its polyphonic capabilities. The collection is a compendium of different types of instrumental composition – not just the two main forms, the sonata and the partita, but, within the two genres, a wide variety of different types of movement. Bach's Sonatas and Partitas have increasingly become an inseparable part of the training and repertoire of violinists, their recorded history dating from the early 1900s.

The five tracks recorded in 1903 by **Joseph Joachim** (1831–1907) include two Bach movements, the First Sonata's Adagio and the First Partita's Tempo di borea (Bach's own titles are used throughout this article), both played in splendid style, if not with complete accuracy. During the ensuing century, recordings of unaccompanied Bach have charted changing fashions and tastes in violin-playing. We can see the turn to continuous vibrato as a basic ingredient of intense, strongly projected tone by following the first recordings of complete sonatas or partitas – **Henri Marteau** in the Third Partita (1912–13), still using a straight, pure sound, **Adolf Busch**'s magnificent 1929 recording of the Second Partita, and **Joseph Szigeti**'s expressive account of the first two sonatas, with more intense *legato* and tonal projection.

The earliest recordings

The recorded legacy of the Sonatas and Partitas is so large that I shall confine my consideration to complete recordings of the six works, and even so I've had to be selective. Looking back to the 1930s, it seems strange that the honour of making the first such set should have fallen to the teenage **Yehudi Menuhin** rather than eminent Bach interpreters such as Busch, Szigeti or Enescu. On a technical level, Menuhin's achievement is most impressive, but his tone, with fast, intense vibrato, eventually becomes wearing. The fugues in the three sonatas have a confident vigour but heavy, uniform accentuation takes away any feeling of liveliness. The best movements in the set are those where Menuhin relaxes and appears to be enjoying himself – in the Preludio and Gavotte of the Third Partita, for instance, and in his intimate account of the Second Sonata's Andante.

Menuhin's teacher, **George Enescu**, completed a recording of the Sonatas and

'These earlier players took their Bach very seriously: everything is earnest and intense'

Partitas in 1950. By this time his playing was no longer at its peak: he suffered from an illness that affected his perception of pitch and his bowing sometimes sounds quite rough, though he's clearly retained a fine technique for playing chords. Throughout, it's Enescu's passionate involvement with the music that stands out, along with a concern that the music

should always flow onward. We notice this especially in the Second Partita's Ciaccona, with its powerful sense of continuity.

The advent of the LP saw a number of complete recordings. **Jasha Heifetz**'s set (1952) has not generally been considered one of the most treasured parts of his legacy. It's possible to play chords on the violin without spreading them, by pressing the bow down; in the fugues in the three sonatas Heifetz favours this method, so as not to disrupt the rhythm, enabling him to complete the Second Sonata's Fuga in under six minutes (some take half as long again). The cost of this achievement is in quality of tone and a brutally emphatic manner. Elsewhere, however, Heifetz enchants us with a dazzling Third Partita Preludio and a delightfully buoyant Second Partita Giga.

The following year, a much less well-known violinist, **Julian Olevsky**, brought fine, well-projected tone and polished style to his recording. He's certainly a more consistent player than **Szigeti** was when he came to make his complete set around 1955. By this time, Szigeti's style had become more laboured, and since his recordings of the 1930s and '40s he'd developed a wide, slow vibrato. These are performances on a grand scale, sometimes heavily accented, and they set me thinking that virtually all these earlier players took their Bach very seriously: everything is earnest and intense, and rarely is there any feeling that the music might have a playful character.

Like Heifetz, Szigeti favoured unspread chords in the sonatas' fugues; at this time a number of critics (including Albert Schweitzer) disliked the idea of arpeggiated chords. A solution was invented in the shape of a curved bow whose tension could be relaxed by a



Joseph Joachim (pictured) was, in 1903, most likely the first to record any of Bach's seminal Sonatas and Partitas



mechanism operated by the right thumb. Such a bow has no historical justification but **Emil Telmányi** used it for his 1953–54 recording. Telmányi shows a sensitive understanding of the music but, to my ears, the sustained harmonies sound absolutely wrong – inexpressive and drone-like – and we lose the possibility, exploited by any artistic violinist, of using different speeds and emphasis in arpeggiation as an expressive device.

I find **Nathan Milstein**'s (1954–56) the most satisfying of these pre-stereo recordings. His tone, brighter and clearer than most violinists' of the time, is well suited to Baroque music and he really enters into the character of each piece. And, good though these performances are, he was to better them, in most respects, with his 1973 stereo remake.

Moving towards authentic Bach

The autograph of the Sonatas and Partitas only became available for study in the early 20th century; older editions contain a number of errors (such as making every note at the start of the Ciaccona a chord), some of which persisted in recordings through the century.

Arthur Grumiaux's famous 1960–61 account represents a move towards a more exact performance of what Bach actually wrote. For a composer of his time, Bach indicates bowings in extraordinary detail. Earlier violinists demonstrate a strong emotional commitment to Bach but Grumiaux adds to this a respect for the details of phrasing that gives his performance solid integrity. Looking back from our experience of different approaches to Bach in recent years, we can see that Grumiaux's vibrant tone and smooth *legato* lines, while helping the communicative power of his playing, prevent the phrasings shown by Bach's slurring patterns from making

their clearest effect. Grumiaux's performance, however, remains deeply satisfying.

Henryk Szeryng's 1967 recording favours spacious, stately tempi. He's a master of the grand style and we can enjoy the polish of his playing throughout the set. Yet, compared to Grumiaux, he seems more aloof, not engaging with the music in the same detailed way. **Sándor Végh** (1971) is more vulnerable than Szeryng or Grumiaux – there are moments of insecure tuning – but he shows a wide expressive range and contrives to give each phrase an individual character without threatening overall momentum. I find his playing especially convincing in the three fugues, whose shape and character he projects in masterly fashion. **Oscar Shumsky** (1979), like Szeryng, favours big tone and strong projection but, as with Enescu, passion and personal conviction triumph over any questions of style. The Loure of the Third Partita, for instance, may ignore the characteristic lift of the dance but Shumsky's sense of how each phrase moves draws us irresistibly into the heart of the music.

The 1980s signal the start of performances that go beyond Grumiaux's respect for the text, recreating 18th-century sounds, bowing styles and attitudes towards musical expression. Most violinists, however, were content to go on as before, trusting artistic conviction above scholarly theory. **Ruggiero Ricci** (1981), for instance, relies on emotional commitment and communicative skill to hold our attention and respect. His avoidance of hard-edged sounds, while it may result in a lack of vigour in lively movements, gives his playing an attractively gentle, persuasive air. **Shlomo Mintz** (1983–84) has a wonderfully smooth technique. He's also more concerned than Ricci about textual accuracy. Much of

this set sounds really fine but some tempi seem too slow (the Adagio of the Third Sonata, for example), and I don't find quite the same level of conviction that's so striking in Shumsky's and Ricci's performances. **Oleg Kagan**'s concert performance (1989) brings us face to face with a very strong musical personality. With no concessions to historical style, it's big, grand violin-playing in the Russian tradition. Some tempi are too slow to convince but Kagan's performance is otherwise intense and compelling, particularly in the Second Partita's Ciaccona and the Third Sonata's Fuga.

Itzhak Perlman's 1986 recording seems to sum up a whole traditional way of playing Bach. His majestic technical command and relaxed confidence give this performance particular authority but I can't help feeling that his preoccupation with rich, sustained tone takes away from the effect of music where light and shade, emphasis and relaxation, are so important. Yet it's difficult not to succumb to the lure of Perlman's tone and appreciate how it casts a beautiful aura over the music.

Alternative approaches

Other performances from this period present a very different picture. The mellow tones, at low pitch, of **Sergiu Luca**'s, **Sigiswald Kuijken**'s and **Jaap Schröder**'s Baroque violins show that expression needn't depend on vibrato. Luca (his account appeared in 1977) offers clean, euphonious playing, tending to be over-careful in some of the quicker movements. Kuijken (1981) eschews any attempt, through big tone or slow speeds, to achieve grandeur; indeed, the playing could be criticised for a lack of dynamic variation. The emphasis is rather on style – in the Partitas' dances the articulation and accentuation is adapted to the character of each movement. The recording is somewhat

THE HISTORIC CHOICE

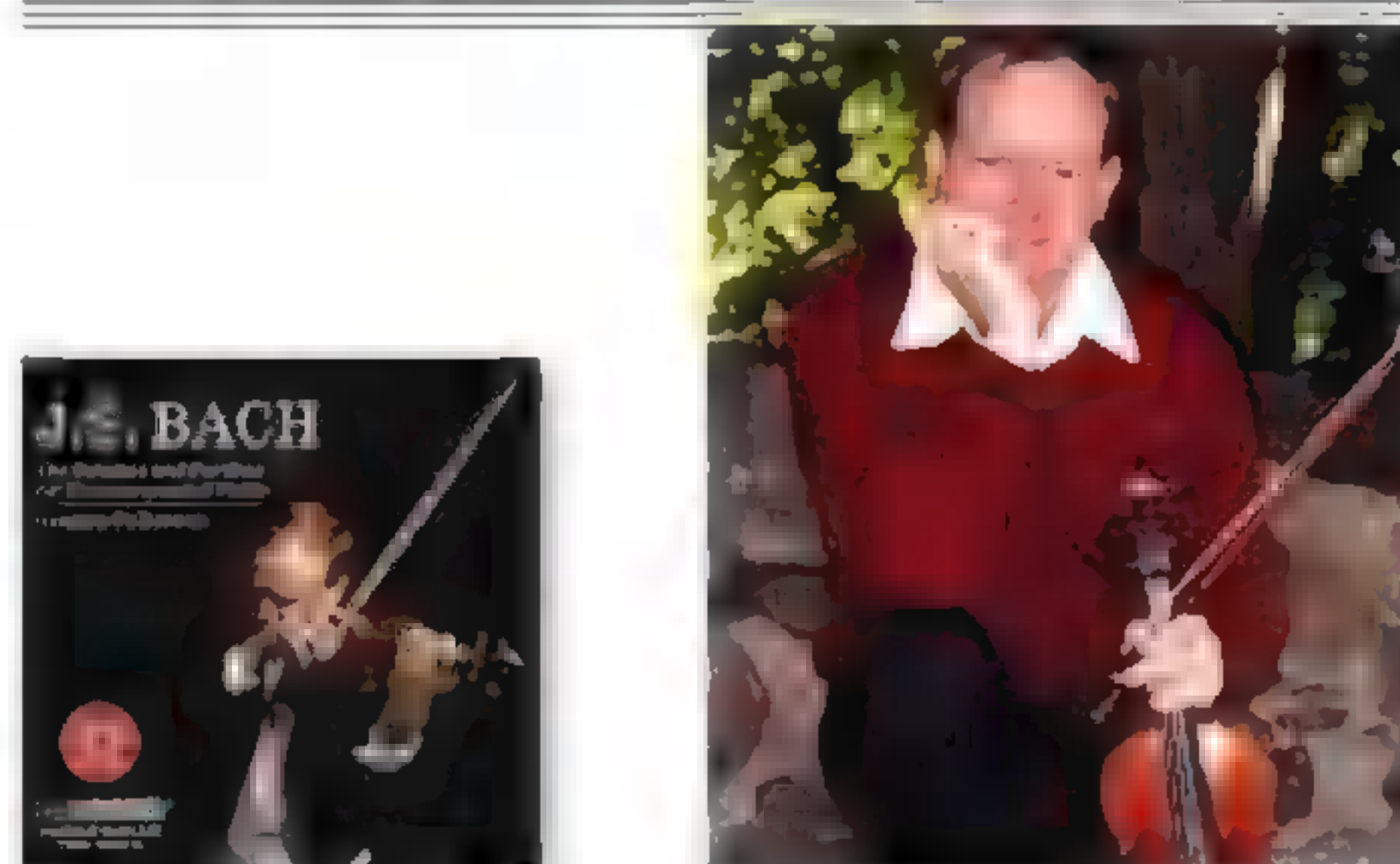


Nathan Milstein

DG Ⓟ ② 457 701-2GOR2

These performances, with repeats missing and following an inaccurate edition, are in no way scholarly but Milstein has a wonderful feel for the music – when to be free, when to be exact and when to lighten his tone. This is top-quality violin-playing.

THE TRADITIONAL CHOICE

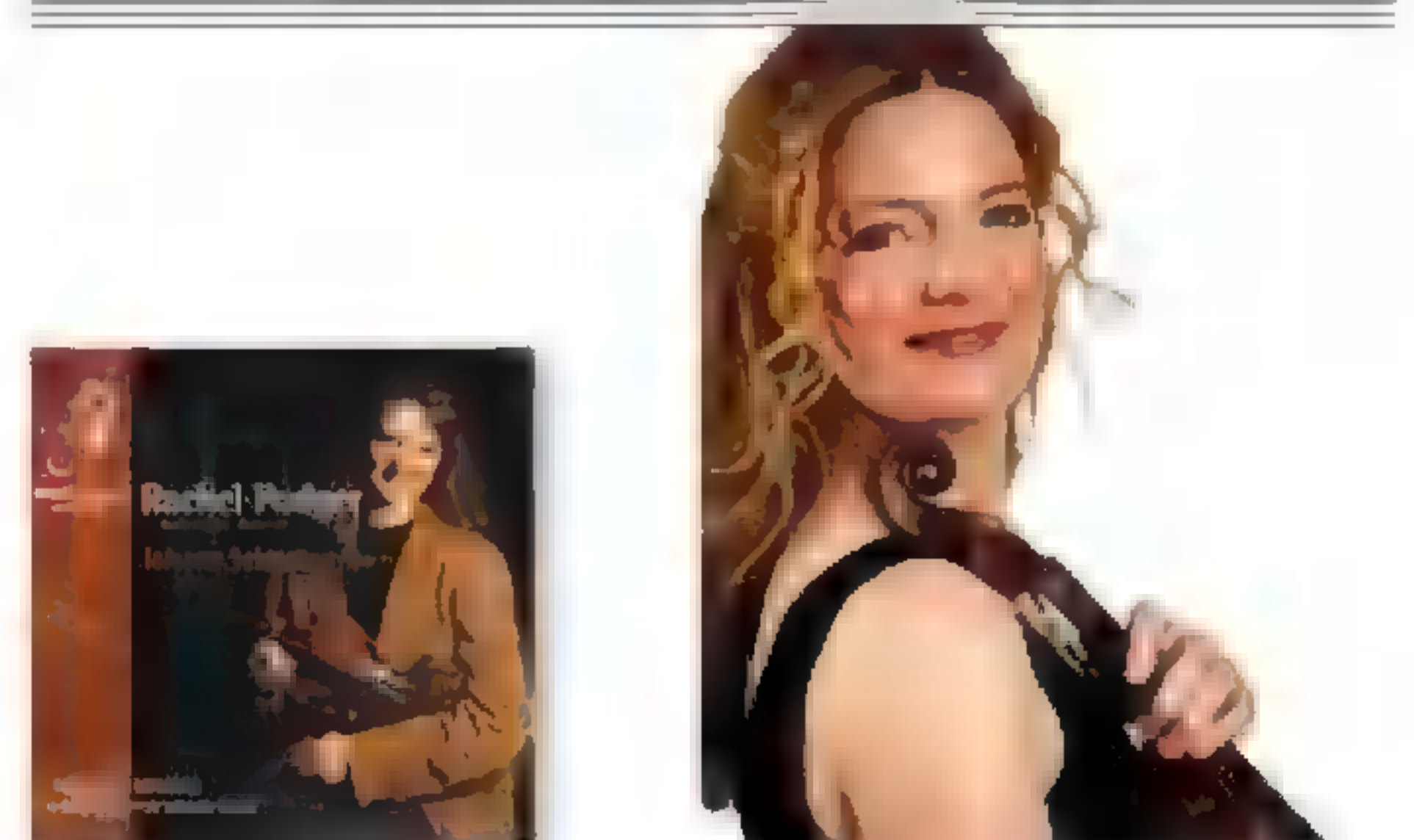


Gregory Fulkerson

Bridge Ⓟ ② BCD9101

Very much a modern player with vibrant tone, grand sonority and strong projection, Fulkerson's account is lifted above the run-of-the-mill by his keen musical intelligence. Every movement is well characterised and grandeur is tempered by grace and poise.

THE BAROQUE CHOICE



Rachel Podger

Channel Classics Ⓟ ② CCSSEL2498

Rachel Podger's tone doesn't depend on vibrato for its sweetness. Her playing is mostly on an intimate scale – light, spirited and dancing – yet her performance of the Ciaccona is one of the strongest projections of Bach's grand design.

dry, accentuating the intimate scale. Kuijken's remake (1999-2000) has a much more generous acoustic and, as a result, the violin sounds fuller and more mellifluous, though with some loss of impact. We notice a gain in subtlety and expressive finesse but the earlier account of the Third Partita has a freshness and energy that's not quite recaptured. By comparison with Kuijken, Schröder (1984-85) struggles with the technical challenges, witnessed by laborious phrases and occasional tuning problems. He's a stylish player with expressive tone but his interpretation lacks Kuijken's distinctive quality.

Gidon Kremer can't be classed as a player motivated by historical performance practice but he represents a move towards a more objective, cool approach. His interpretations, on the 1980 analogue recording and still more on the 2001-02 remake, are individual and creative, exploiting a wide dynamic range and aiming for the utmost in colour and drama. He rises to any challenge with virtuoso panache yet is also ready to play quietly and with great restraint. Such playing provokes strong reactions. I love his gentle way with the First and Second Partitas' Sarabandes but don't like much his brutal way of attacking chords.

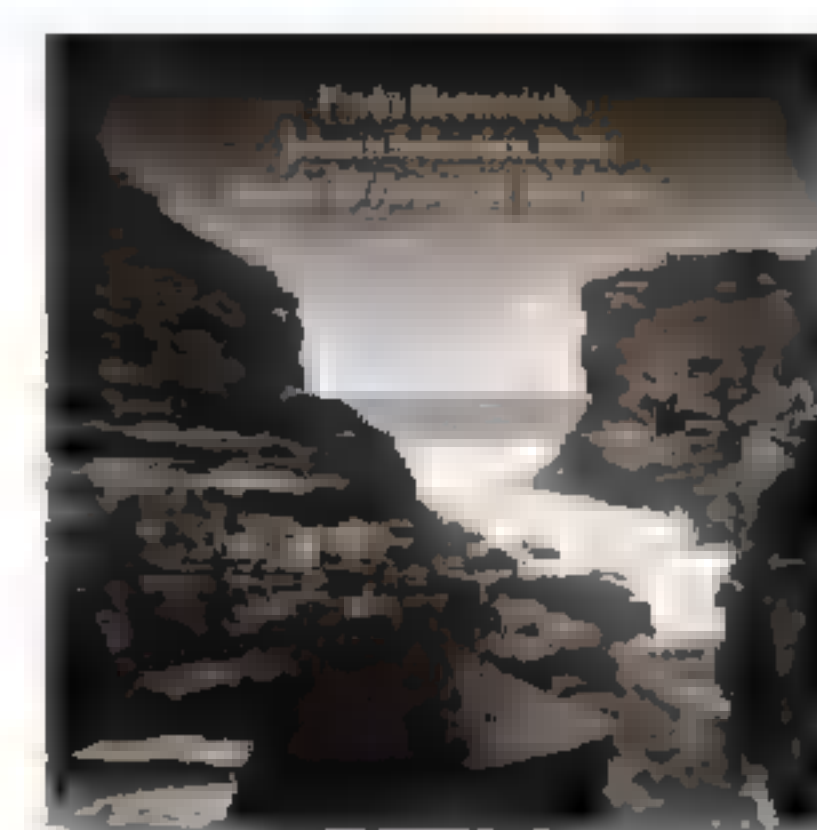
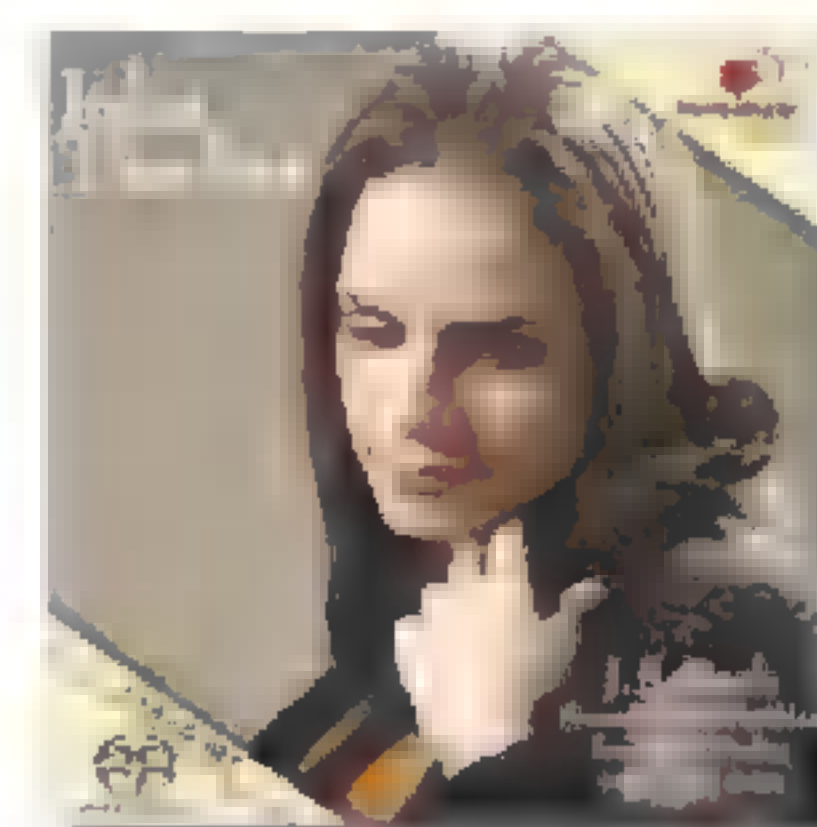
In perhaps the most startling 1980s recording, **Thomas Zehetmair** (1982) takes on board many of the tenets of 18th-century performance style, making clear distinction between strong and weak beats, and exploring the rhetorical basis of Baroque musical expression. It's done with a boldness that contrasts with Kuijken's more sober approach, and Zehetmair employs modern techniques alongside the Baroque ones, such as a wide variety of bow strokes and extreme dynamics.

Recordings from the '90s and beyond

A decade later, **Christian Tetzlaff** also engaged with elements of Baroque style on the modern violin. His two outstanding recordings (1993, 2005) are more conciliatory than Zehetmair's but equally imbued with awareness of Baroque style. He discovers, along with the Baroque violinists, the art of lightly arpeggiating chords, so the most densely polyphonic movements are no longer burdened with a heavy weight of emphasis. Of Tetzlaff's two sets, the second sounds freer, more vivid and personal but also rather more mannered; the earlier account scores for its unaffected, natural character.

Benjamin Schmid's performance (1999) is on an intimate scale and he modifies his vibrato (in the Sarabandes, for instance) to concentrate attention on expressive use of the bow. The highlight of his set is the challenging Third Sonata, especially the opening Adagio, where, by giving extra emphasis to the first

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY



DATE / ARTISTS		RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1903	Joachim (Sonata No 1; Partita No 1 - excs)	Testament (F) ② SBT2 1323 (4/04)
1912/13	Marteau (Partita No 3)	Caprice (F) ④ CAP21620
1929	Busch (Partita No 2)	Ist Discografico Italiano (F) ② IDIS6490/91
1930s	Szigeti (Sonata Nos 1 & 2)	Biddulph (F) ② LAB005/6 (1/90)
1934/36	Menuhin	EMI (B) ② 567197-2 (3/00); (S) ② 575416-2
1950	Enescu	Ca'd'oro (S) ② CDO2014
1952	Heifetz	RCA (M) ② 09026 61748-2 (11/94); Sony (M) ⑩ 88697 21742-2
1953	Olevsky	Doremi (F) ② DHR7831/2 (1/08)
1953/54	Telmányi	Testament (M) ② SBT2 1257 (9/03)
1954/56	Milstein	EMI (M) ② 566869-2 + 566870-2 (5/94 ^R)
1955/56	Szigeti	Vanguard (B) ② ATMCD1246
1960/61	Grumiaux	Philips (B) ② 438 736-2PM2 (2/94); (B) ② 475 7552POR2 (10/01 ^R)
1967	Szeryng	DG (B) ② 453 004-2GTA2 (11/96)
1971	Végh	Auvidis (F) ② V4427 (12/88)
1973	Milstein	DG (B) ② 457 701-2GOR2 (4/75 ^R)
1977	Luca	Nonesuch (F) ② 7559 73030-2 (4/78 ^R)
1979	Shumsky	Nimbus (B) ② NI2557/8
1980	Kremer	Philips (B) ② 416 651-2PM2 (10/81 ^R)
1981	S Kuijken	Deutsche Harmonia Mundi (M) ② GD77043 (4/89, A/01)
1981	Ricc	Regis (S) ② RRC2077 (1/83 ^R)
1982	Zehetmair	Warner Apex (S) ② 2564 64375-2
1983/84	Mintz	DG (B) ② 445 526-2GMA2 (7/85)
1984/85	Schröder	Naxos (S) ② 8 557563/4
1986/87	Perlman	EMI (M) ② 476808-2 (12/88 ^R)
1989	Kagan	Warner Apex (S) ② 2564 69615-7 (4/93 ^R)
1993	Tetzlaff	Virgin (B) ② 522034-2; (F) ② 545089-2; (B) ② 562374-2 (4/95)
1994/95	Poulet	Arion (F) ② ARN268640 (8/96)
1995	Fulkerson	Bridge (F) ② BCD9101 (9/01)
1995	Haendel	Testament (M) ② SBT2090 (1/97)
1995/96	Huggett	Virgin (S) ② 562340-2 (1/98 ^R)
1996	Van Dael	Naxos (S) ② 8 554422 + 8 554423 (5/99)
1997/98	Podger	Channel Classics (B) ② CCSSEL2498 (7/99 ^R ; 12/99 ^R)
1999	Schmid	Oehms Classics (M) ② OC206 (8/04)
1999/2000	Ehnes	Analekta (F) ② FL2 3147/8 (7/02)
1999/2000	S Kuijken	Deutsche Harmonia Mundi (F) ② 05472 77527-2 (A/01)
2001/02	Kremer	ECM (F) ② 476 7291 (1/06)
2004	J Fischer	Pentatone (F) ③ PTC5186 072 (6/05)
2004	Holloway	ECM (F) ② 476 3152 (11/06)
2004	Tognetti	ABC Classics (F) ② ABC476 8051 (10/06)
2005	Tetzlaff	Hänssler Classic (F) ② CD98 250 (8/07)
2006	Ross	ASV (F) ② CDGAU358 (3/07 - nla) + CDGAU359 (7/07 - nla)
2007/08	Mullova	Onyx (F) ② ONYX4040 (5/09)
2008/09	Ibragimova	Hyperion (F) ② CDA67691/2 (11/09)
2010	Beznosiuk	Linn (F) ② LDC366 (5/11)

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Yehudi Menuhin (right) with his teacher George Enescu. Menuhin was the first to record the complete set of Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas

beat in each bar, he creates the effect of a solemn procession. A year or two earlier, Schmid recorded the Sonatas and Partitas with Schumann's piano accompaniment. Dating from a time when a solo violin was considered outrageous, Schumann's contribution is redundant but fascinating all the same.

Gérard Poulet (1994-95) skilfully adapts his modern manner of playing to the demands of the music. It's a shame his recording is over-resonant: this would otherwise rank among the very best accounts, sensitive to the character of each piece, never attempting to push the violin beyond its natural limits and retaining an inspiring vitality.

Julia Fischer (2004) follows Poulet in the way she gently modifies her style. Her set is marked by a consistent combination of technical polish and keen musical intelligence and in many movements her playing, while avoiding extreme expressive gestures, is powerfully eloquent. **James Ehnes** (1999-2000), similarly polished, retains more of the character of the modern virtuoso than Fischer. Even when marvelling at the brilliance of his playing, in the Third Sonata's finale or the Third Partita's Prelude, say, I long for a style that's lighter and more dancing. **Ida Haendel** (1995) represents an earlier era of virtuosity and is very well served by a fine analogue recording. Her playing is immaculate and it's a pleasure to listen to her bright, thrilling tone, although the intense seriousness of her playing doesn't match up to Bach's carefree moments.

For a traditional style that's convincing and enjoyable, **Gregory Fulkerson** (1995), best known as a player of contemporary music, demonstrates his superb, unshowy technique.

His performance is held together by profound musicianship, extending from his careful phrase-shaping to a powerful projection of Bach's large-scale structures.

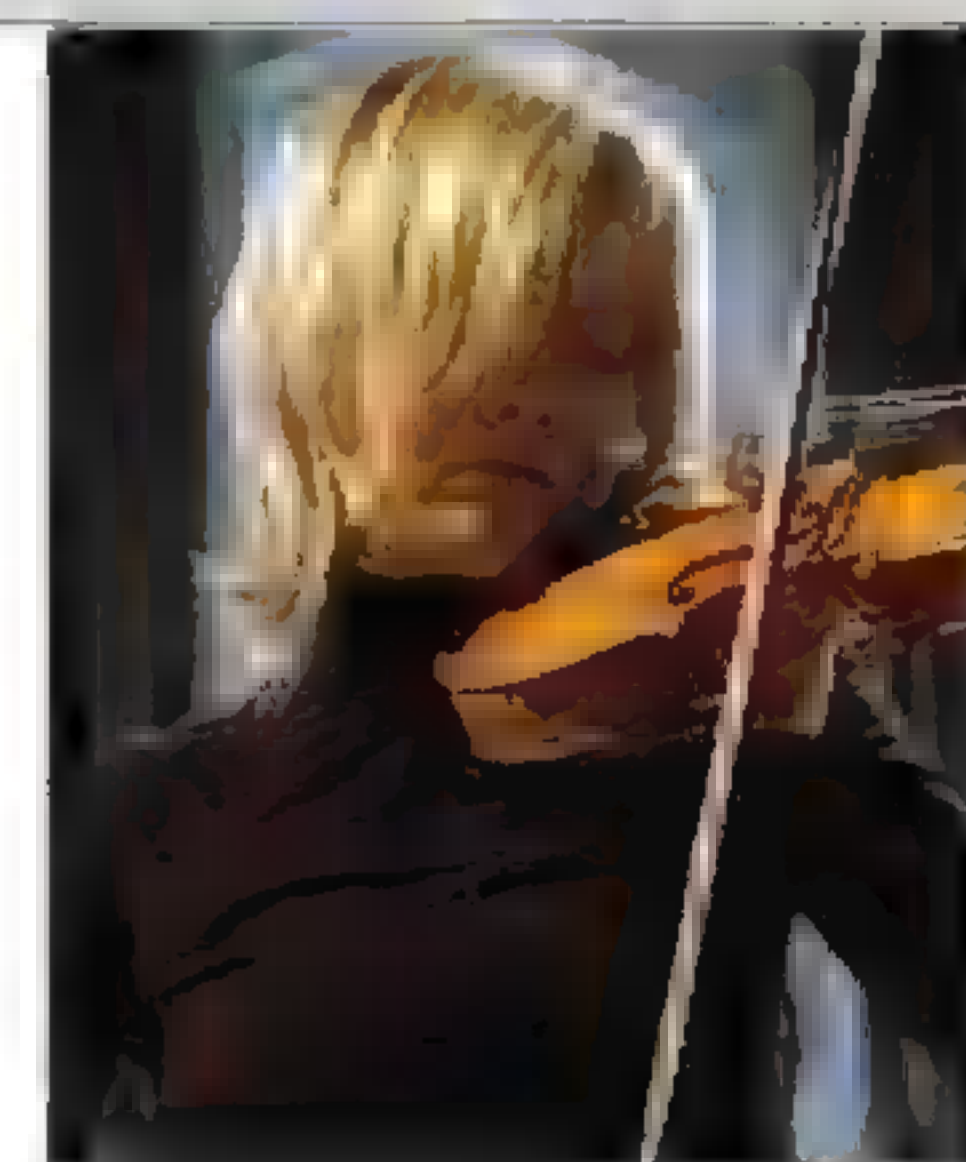
More than any other modern violinist, **Alina Ibragimova** (2008-09) has investigated how she might play Bach so as to incorporate what's known about 18th-century string-playing while using fully the resources of her instrument. To give just one example: by largely eschewing vibrato, she concentrates expression in the use of the bow – resulting in sounds and phrases that compel attention and often touch the emotions.

Two recordings adopt a "halfway house" position between modern and Baroque. **Richard Tognetti** (2004) and **Viktoria Mullova** (2007-08) play at low pitch, with gut strings and, in Mullova's case, a Baroque bow. There's an immediate benefit in richness and mellowness. Mullova rivals Ibragimova in her well-learned stylishness but, where Ibragimova is meditative, or else light and airy, Mullova goes for brilliant effects and sharp contrasts. Hers is one of the most satisfying recent accounts; I'm not as enthusiastic about Tognetti's set. It's fine, confident playing but strikes me as fussy, with constant changes of bow stroke, and dynamic and rhythmic modifications.

Baroque recordings

Since the pioneering days of Kuijken and Schröder, a further number of Baroque violin recordings have appeared. **Lucy van Dael** (1996) and **Monica Huggett** (1995) are both polished players, and both seek to realise the Baroque ideal of musical expression as a branch of rhetoric – giving musical phrases the animation and variety of emotionally

THE TOP CHOICE



Alina Ibragimova

Hyperion © ② CDA67691/2

My enjoyment of Alina Ibragimova's set continues to grow with each hearing. Technically, there's no question that she's immensely resourceful – in the different ways she plays chords, for instance – and it's all done to find a suitable expression for every detail. The result is compelling and inspiring.

charged speech. There are some beautiful movements but neither artist maintains the necessary balance between making each gesture vividly expressive and steadiness of rhythm and tempo. **Jacqueline Ross** (2006) gets this balance right and her performances are generally most spirited but are limited by a lack of tonal strength and variety.

My two top Baroque recordings are **Rachel Podger's** (1997-98) and **John Holloway's** (2004). Podger offers a polished reading with lovely, luminous tone, very well recorded. She, too, gets the right balance between strongly articulated gestures and rhythmic continuity, and her characterisation of the Partitas' dances is spot on. John Holloway strikes a more serious note, knowledgeable and committed – the fugues are taken at quite moderate speeds but with splendid rhythmic impetus. Like Podger, he manages to combine freedom of gesture with a care for the music's flow and overall shape. Most recently, **Pavlo Beznoziuk** (2010) demonstrates a deep understanding of the music, while missing something of the outgoing vitality of Holloway or Podger.

Since the 1930s, and especially in recent years, there's been an enormous development in the way violinists approach Bach. But I've been even more struck by the way all the best performances have involved an intimate, feeling partnership between composer and interpreter. Milstein's, Fulkerson's and Podger's are among the best examples but my favourite account has to be from Alina Ibragimova. ©



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SHOSTAKOVICH

PIANO TRIOS & SONGS

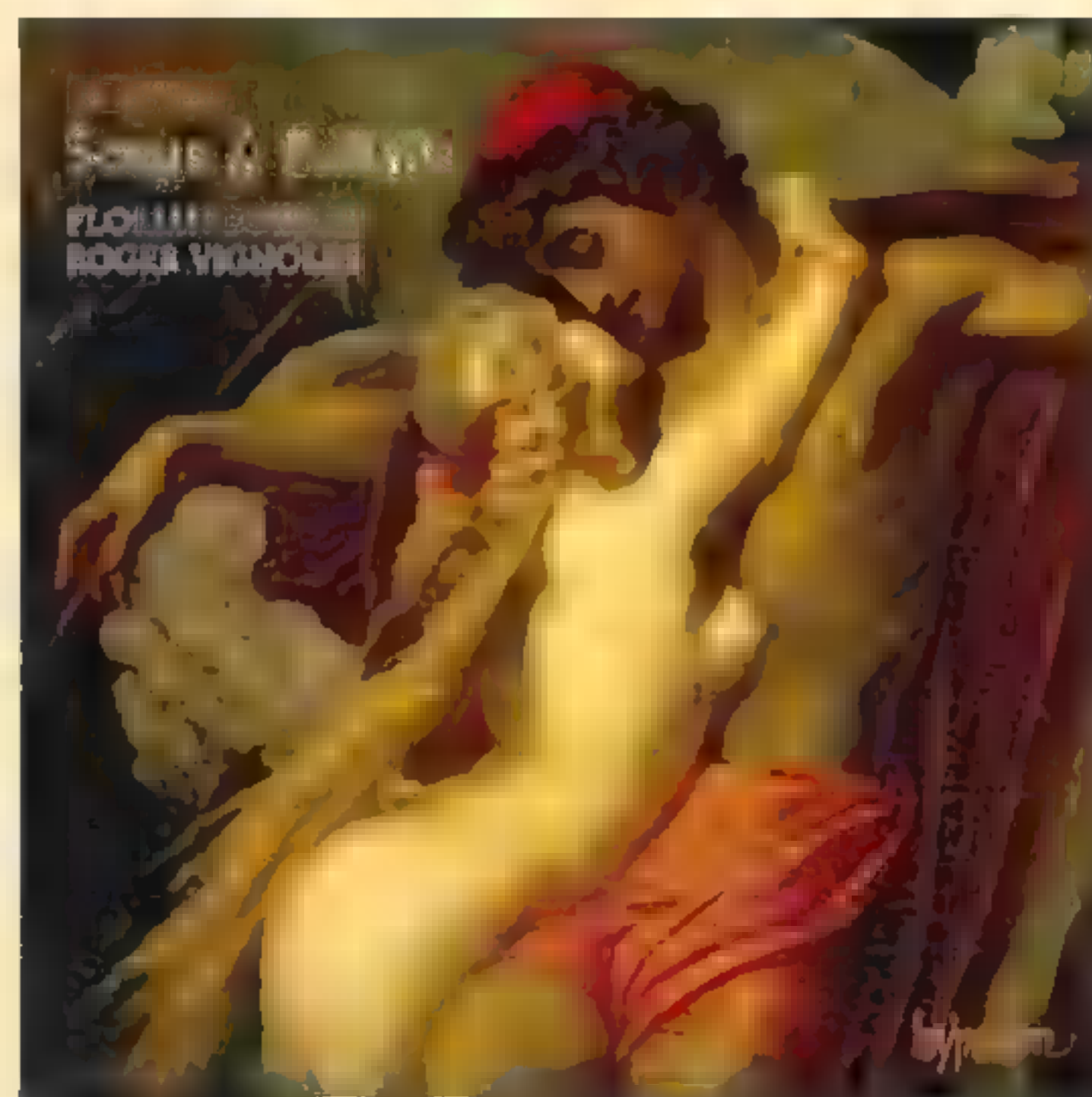
The Florestan Trio performs an all-Shostakovich programme comprising the two piano trios and the Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok, for which the trio is joined by the glorious soprano voice of Susan Gritton. Piano Trio No 2 is one of the composer's greatest masterpieces. THE FLORESTAN TRIO
SUSAN GRITTON



Compact Disc CDA67834

LOEWE SONGS & BALLADS

In his lifetime the German composer Carl Loewe was often referred to as the 'Schubert of North Germany'. He is frequently credited with the development of the romantic ballad into a powerful art form. Many of the ballads on this disc are masterpieces of their genre and they are performed here in a magisterial Hyperion debut by Austrian baritone Florian Boesch. In these refined performances it is clear why Boesch has been labelled as 'one of the finest interpreters of Lieder of his generation'. FLORIAN BOESCH / ROGER VIGNOLES



Compact Disc CDA67866

SCHOENDORFF

THE COMPLETE WORKS

In this recording the Gramophone Award-nominated Cinquecento uncover the complete surviving works of Philipp Schoendorff. Schoendorff, originally a pupil of the illustrious Philippe de Monte, was a successful choirmaster at the Prague court of the Emperor Rudolf II. Also included are a Magnificat by his teacher de Monte and the two motets on which his pupil based his Masses. No fan of Renaissance polyphony should overlook this outstanding recording. CINQUECENTO



Compact Disc CDA67854

VICTORIA

MISSA TRAHE ME POST TE & MOTETS

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SMETANA / SIBELIUS

STRING QUARTETS

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THE RAPHAEL ENSEMBLE



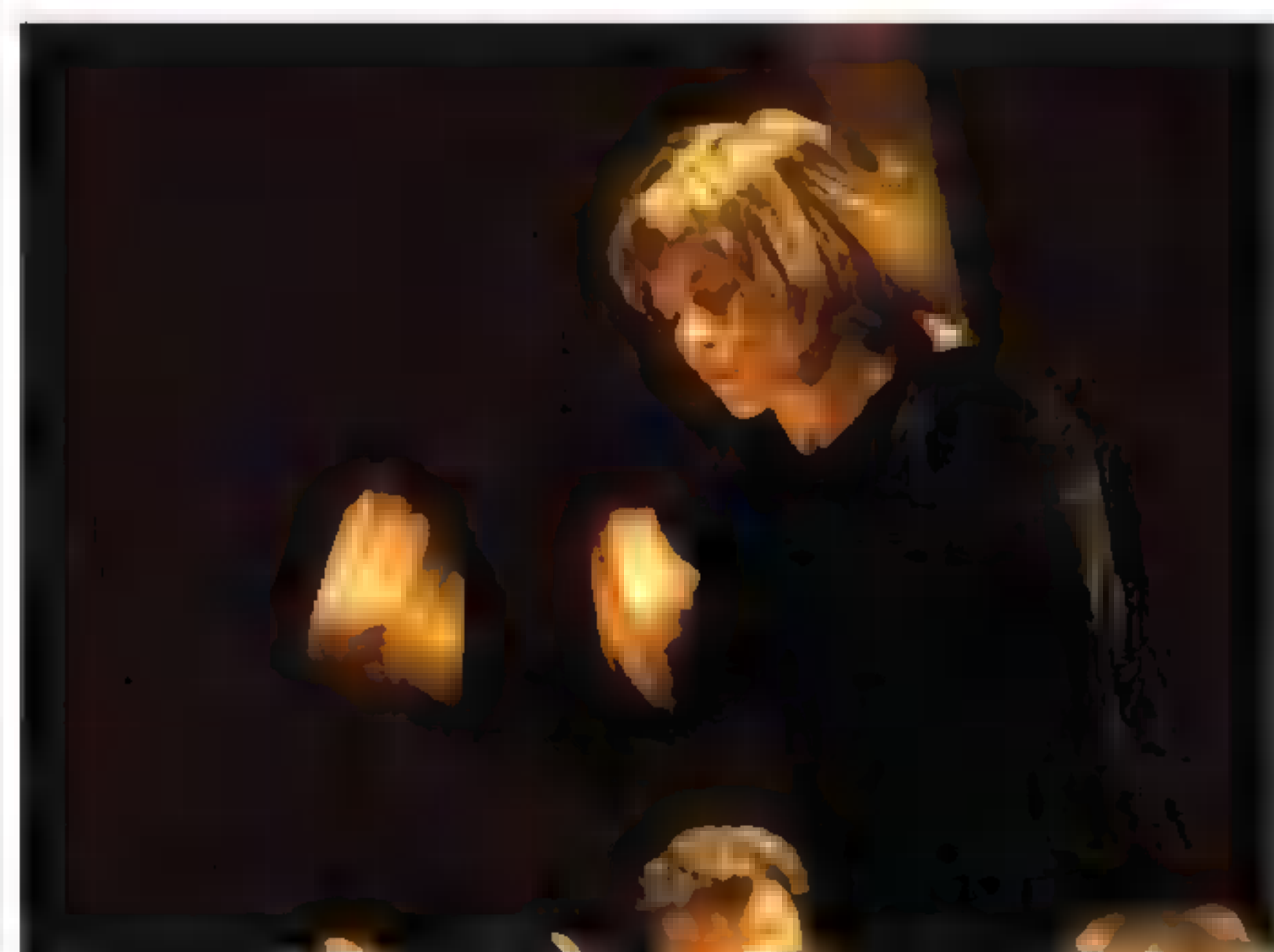
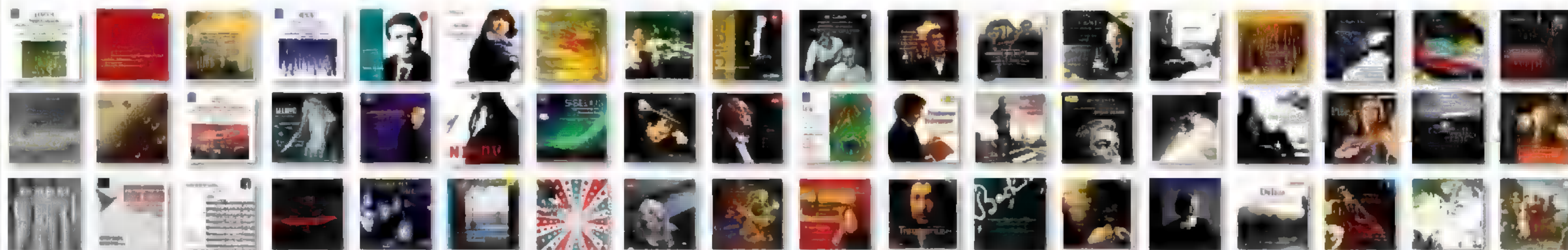
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Dancing to the tune of
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Six Suites, two cellos, one composer:
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**VOCAL**

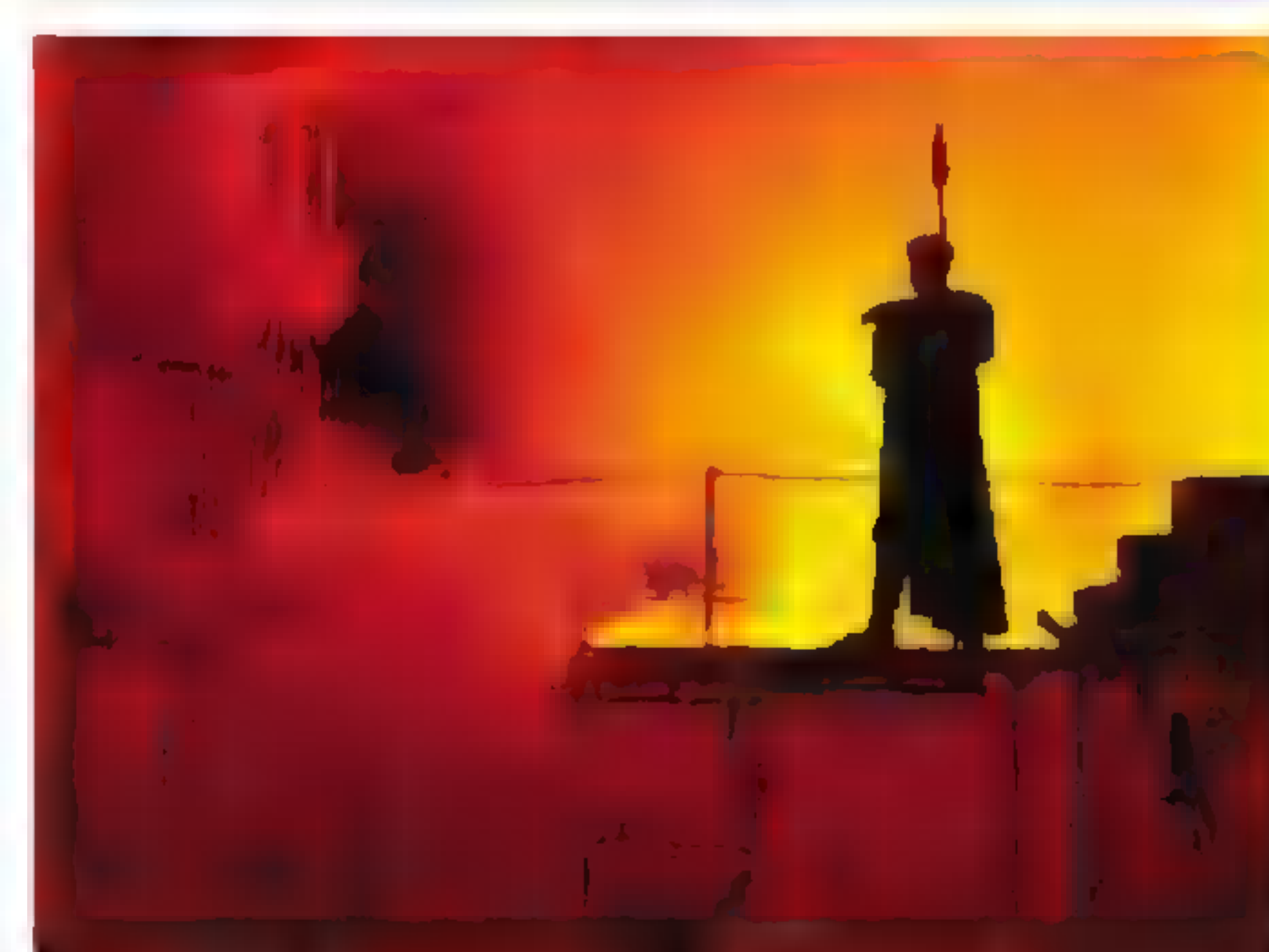
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Ludus Baroque gorges on Handel

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George Petrou cooks up the first of two
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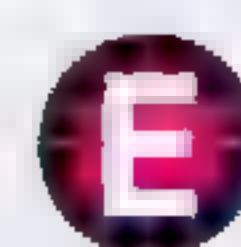
98

KEY TO SYMBOLS

- R** Reissue
- H** Historic
- 2** Compact disc (number of discs in set)
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- I** translation(s) included
- S** Synopsis included

- N** Notes included
- s** subtitles included
- SACD** SACD
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- oas** only available separately
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Editor's Choice
See page 14



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Orchestral

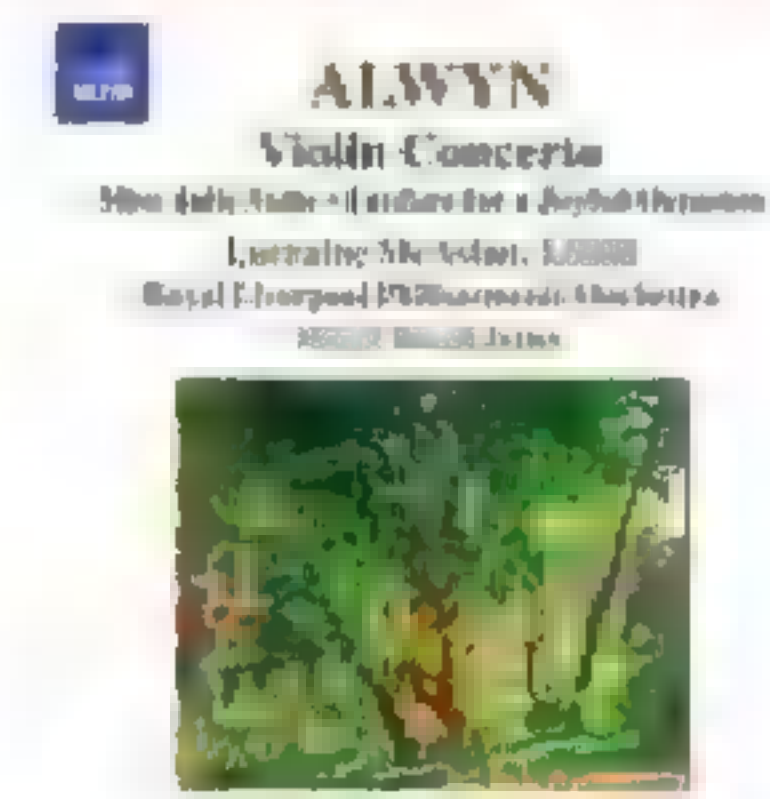
Abbado's Brandenburgs on CD • Brahms from Berezovsky • MTT with Copland and Ives

Alwyn

Violin Concerto^a. Miss Julie Suite (arr Lane). Fanfare for a Joyful Occasion

^aLorraine McAslan *vn* Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / David Lloyd-Jones
Naxos © 8 570705 (58' • DDD)

The 'serious' music of a film composer reveals some compelling rarities



The forgotten Violin Concerto of 1939, a substantial work of 37 minutes which the composer never heard in its orchestral form during his lifetime,

reminds us that William Alwyn – desperate to be considered a “serious” creative figure – was already producing works of considerable stature and symphonic design well before he began his series of five symphonies in 1948. Lloyd-Jones and McAslan give admirable shape to the long, rhapsodic first movement which, in many ways, is almost like a hybrid first movement of a symphony rather than a concerto. The reverie of the much shorter slow movement provides an effective and haunting foil to this extended essay while the similarly short but more technically demanding finale is performed with agile warmth by McAslan, whose attractive tone and expressive style seem entirely in tune with this distinctive musical language.

It is good to hear the suite of pieces from Alwyn's last completed opera, *Miss Julie* (1976-79), arranged by Philip Lane. The RLPO respond splendidly to its colourful orchestration; indeed, one cannot help but feel that Alwyn's immense experience with film helped with the invention of the opera's strikingly vivid musical ideas, not least the sinister recurring waltz, the rich but ironic love music and the closing *marcia funebre* which marks Miss Julie's offstage suicide. A recording that fuels one's desire to hear the entire opera properly and professionally staged. **Jeremy Dibble**

JS Bach

Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-51

Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado

DG © 477 8908GH2 (91' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Teatro Municipale Romolo Valli, Reggio Emilia, April 21, 2007

From Medici Arts DVD 205 6738 (4/09)



Delicious Brandenburgs that sparkle ever brighter on CD



Bach reclaimed by “mainstream” musicians is always welcome, never more so than when the director is so intent on projecting the virtues of the music for their own

sake. These performances from the Teatro Reggio Emilia will be familiar to those who acquired the Medici Arts DVD, favourably reviewed by Lindsay Kemp in these pages, but the audio-only experience draws out a super-contented gestural world which had only intermittently communicated itself before.

Claudio Abbado's Orchestra Mozart is a hybrid in terms of stylistic provenance, in both the background of the players and artistic results. Some, like the leader Giuliano Carmignola, are fully fledged period players – sporting all form of bows, if I remember rightly from the DVD – while trumpeter Reinhold Freidrich dazzles unashamedly with a state-of-the-art piccolo trumpet. It's an entirely 21st-century set-up of flexibility and mix-and-match. Yet the coherence of the whole is a tribute to Abbado's ear for detailed refinement and clarity of thought. Only occasionally does over-regulated articulation, as in the first movements of Concertos Nos 1 and 3, suggest a wish to dim over-zealous “period” headlights with a touch of Boultonian *legato*.

The hallmark of this set is the ambition to create lithe, beautiful and elegant statements in which witty, sophisticated dialogues are carried off within a heady textural landscape. Some may find the *Allegros* of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Concertos just too buoyant and will wish to return to the ruddy, warm-blooded joy of Trevor Pinnock's Award-winning set of 2008 (Avie, 3/08). The Fourth is perhaps the only concerto that takes time to find its feet, and the recorder-playing appears somewhat at odds with the rest. Yet there is generally a consistent virtuoso spirit and unity of purpose here of a kind which Chailly only intermittently achieves with his Gewandhaus forces (Decca, 5/10).

The Fifth spins like a happy top, with stunningly immediate harpsichord-playing from Ottavio Dantone, the Second is a tactile chamber Elysium and the Sixth full of bittersweet, aristocratic *richesse*. These are

life-affirming live performances (quite a few surface noises, especially on headphones) which glide effortlessly on to the high table.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

CPE Bach

Six Harpsichord Concertos, Wq43 H471-6

Andreas Staier *hpd*

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Petra Müllejans
Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2083/4 (94' • DDD)

Daring concertos from a leading keyboard player and one of the finest period bands



This is a hot CD, one of those releases where everything seems to have arrived together at the right time. Here is the world's finest Baroque orchestra eagerly joining with one of the world's best harpsichordists in concertos by a composer who right now seems to be winning new recognition as the giant musical personality he was.

Bach composed over 50 keyboard concertos, of which these are the six he published in Hamburg in 1772, four years after he had moved there from his dispiriting harpsichordist's post at the Prussian court. The sense of creative release evident in the well-known string symphonies of 1773 is present in these concertos, too, and indeed it is their formal daring that has particularly excited Staier, to judge from the enthusiasm of his booklet-note. Unusual and boldly colliding key relationships, shock dynamic changes and experimental movement layouts rescued from apparent craziness by forward-looking cyclical procedures have Staier understandably likening Bach to Beethoven. Your ears can confirm the truth of the comparison when (for instance) the first movement of No 2 crashes into the start of the second; but Staier's assessment of the extraordinary No 4 as a one-movement fantasia-concerto anticipating the intellectual processes of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* or Liszt's B minor Sonata seems no less valid.

Of course, Bach might have done all this and still been boring, and it is true that the concerto genre has not always shown him at his most compelling. That is emphatically not the case here, however, and in any case there is little danger of anything ever sounding dull with these performers. Tautly driven fast movements whipped into shape by precision



horns, graceful slower ones warmed by soft flutes and busy but intricately shaped solos are all realised with matchless expertise and an explosive energy to match Bach's sparky imagination. Staier's copy of a big Hass harpsichord, which has served him well on recent solo recordings and on which he makes free with the many register combinations, stands up to the superbly boisterous orchestra with ease. Marvellous stuff. **Lindsay Kemp**

Bax

Winter Legends. Saga Fragment.
Morning Song, 'Maytime in Sussex'
Ashley Wass *pf* Bournemouth Symphony
Orchestra / James Judd
Naxos © 8 572597 (56' • DDD)

Another sparkling gem of a release in Ashley Wass's Bax series for Naxos



Bax wrote his large-scale *Winter Legends* for piano and orchestra (a *sinfonia concertante* in all but name) very quickly during the last quarter of 1929, finishing the

orchestration the following April. According to its creator, the piece possesses "no communicable programme... [though] the listener may associate what he hears with any heroic tale or tales of the North". That said, the work's colossal range of emotions and extraordinary variety of texture, colour and incident would seem to suggest a more specific, personal narrative – revealingly, the (unpublished) manuscript bears a dedication to Bax's lover and muse, Harriet Cohen. In terms of structure, *Winter Legends* follows the "three movements plus epilogue" groundplan of Bax's symphonies and can boast a surfeit of memorable invention; indeed, the work as a whole contains some of his most piercingly beautiful visions. Listen carefully to the three boldly contrasting ideas that appear in the exposition of the first movement, for they are destined to reappear, often cleverly disguised, at key points during the voyage.

Cohen gave the world premiere with Boult and the BBC SO on February 10, 1932 – and you can hear what a commanding exponent she was in Dutton's restoration of the first of her two broadcast performances from November 1954 (8/05). Margaret Fingerhut's eloquent 1986 recording (Chandos, 2/87) opens out a few cuts made by the composer (most notably some 16 bars of ravishing music in the epilogue). Textually, Wass follows Cohen's lead and proves a comparably imperious champion, his partnership with James Judd and an eagerly responsive Bournemouth SO resulting in the most thrustingly cogent account to date. Not only is Wass unfazed by the solo part's considerable technical hurdles, he also displays melting poetry and limpid poise in

abundance. The reverberant acoustic means that a few telling details get swallowed in the more seismic *tuttis* but otherwise the balance is basically well judged, orchestral timbre truthful and piano tone always ingratiating.

Morning Song is entirely different again, a charmingly tuneful, sunlit miniature from 1946 for piano and small orchestra fashioned by Bax in his role of Master of the King's Music to mark Princess Elizabeth's 21st birthday (on April 21, 1947). The final item, *Saga Fragment*, returns us to the North and is a reworking from 1933 for piano, trumpet, percussion and strings of the fiery Piano Quartet in one movement that Bax had completed 11 years previously. Both pieces are winningly served by these newcomers.

Andrew Achenbach

Beethoven

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 15^a; No 3, Op 37^b
Emil Gilels *pf*

New Philharmonia Orchestra / Sir Adrian Boult
ICA Classics © ICAC5000 (70' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, July ^a10 & ^b13, 1967

Elegance and enviable virtuosity in two concerto performances from 1967



These performances were taken live from the Royal Festival Hall in 1967. And here, the klavier-tiger storms of Gilels's first appearances in the West (for Claudia Cassidy, "of a blow-torch incandescence") are resolved in playing of a transparency, elegance and calm that were no less characteristic of his later career. True, Gilels's phenomenal command is much in evidence in the finales of both concertos, where the music quickens into life; and in, say, the *presto* coda of No 3, he may well cause lesser pianists to pale with envy. Yet even in this concerto a reserve hangs over the turbulent pages of "Beethoven's C minor of life" (EM Forster). Everything falls naturally into place, unforced and not distorted by bluster or idiosyncrasy. Gilels makes the supposed division between Mozart's Apollonian genius and Beethoven's Dionysian genius dissolve in a trice.

Others may turn to the more overt, spine-tingling vitality of Serkin or the irrepressible *joie de vivre* of Argerich but, for unalloyed dignity and composure, these performances are hard to equal. Sir Adrian Boult's gentlemanly, unobtrusive beat is a further asset in these finely transferred recordings. **Bryce Morrison**

Beethoven

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 15; No 2, Op 19
Shani Diluka *pf* Bordeaux Aquitaine National
Orchestra / Kwamé Ryan
Mirare © MIR126 (64' • DDD)

Selected comparisons:

Uchida, BRSO, Sanderling (4/98^a) (PHIL) 475 6757PB3

Lewis, BBC SO, Bělohlávek (9/10) (HARM) HMC90 2053/5

A pianist to watch in performances with a little too much going on



Shani Diluka is a young pianist with a lot to say. She coaxes a beautiful sound from her Bechstein, spinning a lustrously beautiful thread through the

Adagio of the B flat major Concerto. With a truly first-rate orchestra the results would have been very notable; the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, under the sensitive direction of Kwamé Ryan, is clearly a fine regional ensemble – it just doesn't quite match the string tone or characterful wind-playing of the greatest. But there is much to admire: in the first movement of the B flat Concerto Diluka takes a notably Mozartian approach, which works wonderfully under her nimble fingers, even if the cadenza (she chooses Kempff's throughout in homage to an artist she clearly reveres) comes as a bit of a surprise, rising up from the depths as it does.

It's in the C major Concerto that her approach is less convincing. Is it possible for a performance to have too many ideas? In the finale, for instance, she doesn't miss an opportunity for an accent or a dynamic detail. It becomes a bit unstable as a result and ultimately there's a lack of a coherent vision. Listening to Lewis and Uchida, by comparison, there's a terrific sense of the music unfolding ineluctably; the detail never gets in the way of the narrative. Diluka's résumé mentions Martha Argerich and there is perhaps a touch of the great Argentinian's highly reactive, febrile approach to the music in this reading – but as we all know, she's no more imitable than Glenn Gould. Shani Diluka, though, is clearly an artist to watch and her sense of individuality is refreshing. **Harriet Smith**

Brahms

Symphonies – No 2, Op 73^a; No 3, Op 90^b

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900111 (79' • DSD/DDD)

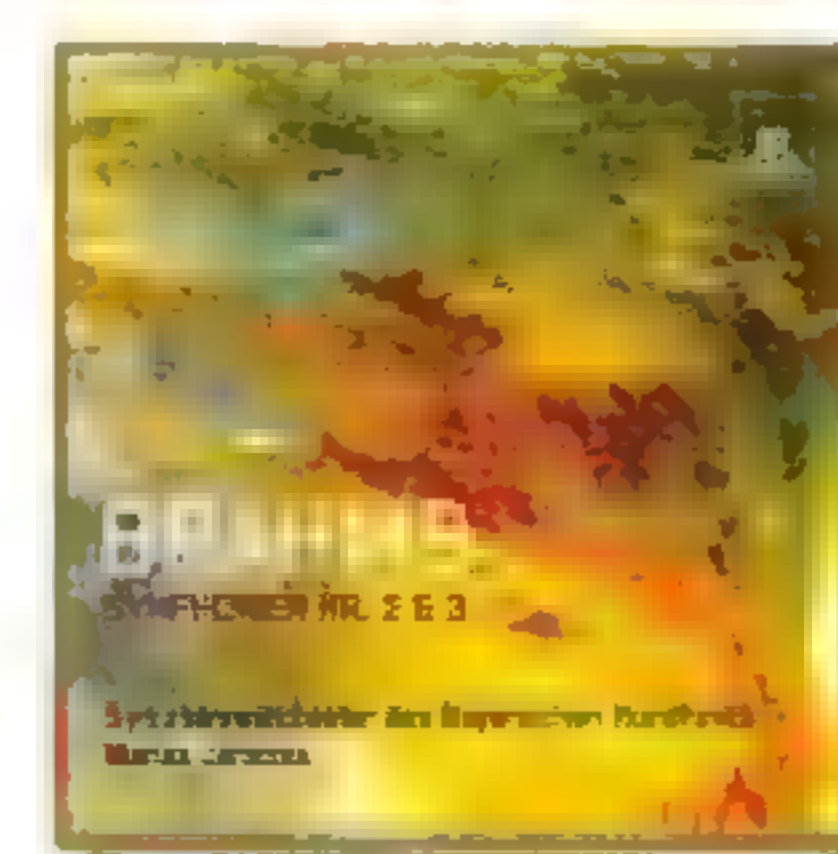
Recorded live at the ^aHerkulesaal, Munich, March 16 & 17, 2006; ^bMusikverein, Vienna, January 16, 2010

Symphony No 3 – selected comparisons:

ORR, Gardiner (11/09) (SDG) SDG704

Oslo PO, Jansons (SIMA) PSC1204

Big Bavarian performances of Brahms's middle two symphonies



One record guide recently placed Mariss Jansons's Oslo Philharmonic recording of the Third at the top of the heap but sceptics should turn to this new

Orchestral reviews

version to hear how close an affinity he has with this difficult piece. What may appear to be refined restraint in the articulation of the first movement's F-A-F pays off in a superbly calibrated account of the finale (restrained in different ways: a remarkably consistent *minim*=80, where Gardiner takes a more flexible, sometimes headlong *minim*=93) that faces into the storm head-on before eventually finding that F-A-F has been flowing like a deep-sea current all the while, though the playing at the start of the coda conveys a moving sense of the symphony brought to shore on the very frailest of barques. No applause breaks the spell.

The tenderly songful account of the Second betokens no less intimate a connection between Jansons and the players. Every beat is distinctly placed, which can make this symphony's many offbeats unduly predictable, and the episodes of the second movement succeed one another as if laid before us in a Poussin panorama of the seasons. I like very much the kinks in the phrasing of the *Allegretto* but I wish he had pressed on (or not held back) at the start of the first movement's development section. Again, though, Jansons has taken the long view. The finale has a huge, rustic energy, like a Jamaican sprinter who has peaked at the right time for the big race. These are big performances in every sense of the word.

Peter Quantrill

Brahms

Violin Concerto, Op 77^a.

String Sextet No 2, Op 36^b

Isabelle Faust, ^bJulia-Maria Kretz *vns*

^bStefan Fehlandt, ^bPauline Sachse *vas*

^bChristoph Richter, ^bXenia Jankovic *vc*

^aMahler Chamber Orchestra / Daniel Harding

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2075 (75' • DDD)

Striking additions cast a familiar concerto in an unfamiliar guise



This account of the Violin Concerto is noteworthy in several ways. Instead of the familiar Joachim cadenza in the first movement, Isabelle Faust plays one by Busoni, strikingly accompanied by timpani rolls and then by the orchestral strings, and powerfully integrated into the structure. With a string section of just 32, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra achieve an unusual degree of clarity, with the important wind parts prominent. And Faust is often happy to allow soloists from the orchestra to take centre stage, as when she gives way to the oboe towards the end of the *Adagio*.

She has also taken notice of Joachim's metronome marks: in the first movement the initial speed is not unusual but it's maintained through the movement in a way we don't

often hear: the start of the second solo, for instance (track 1, 9'42"), continues the orchestra's forward movement, whereas Joshua Bell (Decca, 5/96) immediately holds back, as has become conventional. The *Adagio*'s opening paragraph has a happy, serenade-like atmosphere, and Faust is then able to make an effective point of the *più sostenuto* middle section. Elsewhere, the fiery parts of the concerto are particularly successful and the lyrical episodes very touching. By the side of Bell's spontaneity, some listeners may find parts of the first movement too restrained, but in the finale she outdoes him in liveliness and gypsy character.

The same applies to the Sextet. There are places where the warm expressiveness of the Lindsays (ASV, 7/06) is missing but this performance offers near-perfect balance and integration of sound. I admire especially the powerful sense of line running through the *Poco adagio* variations and the way the melancholy *Scherzo* gives way so naturally to its rollicking Trio section. **Duncan Druce**

Brahms · Chopin · Falla

Brahms Piano Concerto No 2, Op 83^a.

Rhapsody, Op 79 No 1^b. Capriccio, Op 76 No 2^b

Chopin Nocturne, Op 27 No 2^b. Waltz, Op 64

No 2^b **Falla** El Amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance^b

Arthur Rubinstein *pf* ^aWDR Symphony

Orchestra, Cologne / Christoph von Dohnányi

ICA Classics © ICAC5003 (75' • ADD)

Recorded live in ^bNijmegen, Holland, April 20, 1963;

^aZürich, May 23, 1966

The legendary charisma and indelible individuality of Arthur Rubinstein



Arthur Rubinstein was at the height of his powers during the 1960s and, heard live from Zürich and in a rare appearance with a German orchestra (conscious of the fate of so many of his race and nationality, he refused all offers to play in Germany), he performs with an eloquence and exultance that are quite simply unique. Every inch a musical king, he makes no sentimental concessions but imperiously sweeps Brahms's outsize demands under the carpet. At the same time, his seamless *legato*, ravishing tone and soaring lyricism declare his identity throughout. Hear him in the *più adagio* section of the *Andante* and you will note his indelible individuality, that momentary holding back within the phrase, that sudden catch in the voice that made him possibly the greatest "singer-pianist" of all. Again, never did the outwardly academic term "rubato" translate so effortlessly into musical breathing.

A momentary failure of concentration in the opening pages of the *Allegro appassionato* is

compensated on the repeat with unfaltering authority; and if the finale is a "glory of tumbling gaiety", you are also conscious of an iron fist in a velvet glove. Then there is one delectable encore after another, each reflecting a time and place before the constricting influences of the competition circuit or the tyrannical quest for clinical, note-perfect CDs. What heart-easing *cantabile* in the B minor Rhapsody's second subject; what teasing elegance in the B minor Capriccio from Op 76 (here listed oddly as being in F sharp minor)! How understandable Rubinstein makes Richter's shying away from Chopin, daunted by a patrician supremacy he could hardly match. Falla's *Ritual Fire Dance* (announced in German by the pianist) is tossed off with all of Rubinstein's legendary charisma and aplomb. The transfers are excellent and so one can hardly be sufficiently grateful for the issue of such musical and, above all, human treasure.

Bryce Morrison

Brahms · Schumann

Brahms Piano Concerto No 2, Op 83

Schumann Piano Concerto, Op 54

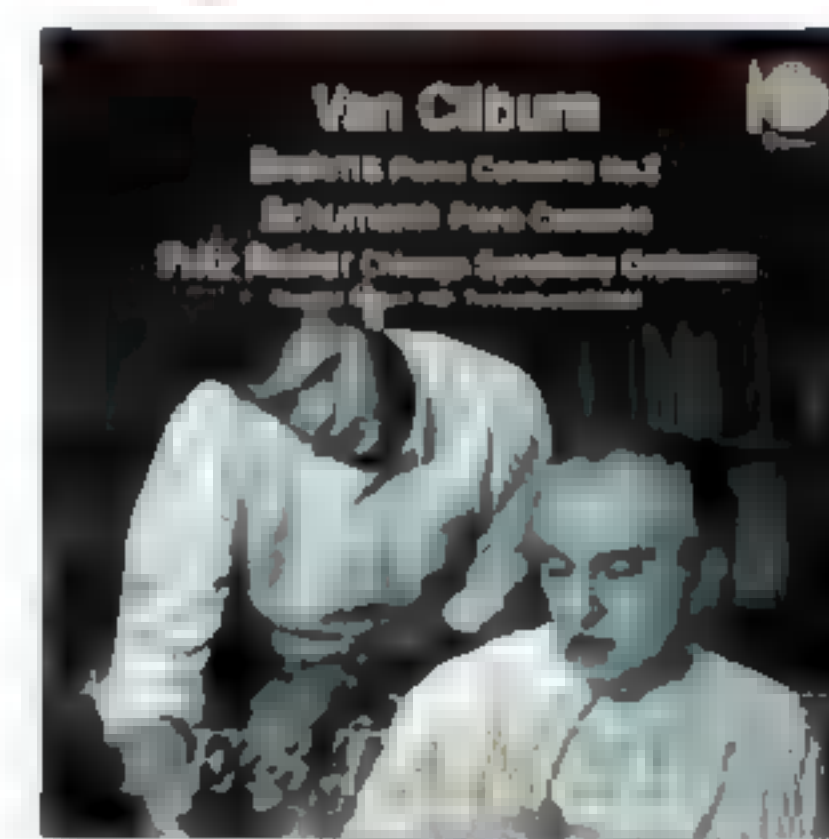
Van Cliburn *pf*

Chicago Symphony Orchestra / Fritz Reiner

Testament © ② SBT2 1460 (83' • ADD)

Recorded live 1960

Van Cliburn never reached the same heights as his competition triumph



Van Cliburn's triumph at the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958 and his unprecedented ticker-tape welcome home was a story that made front pages worldwide. What other pianist has inspired that kind of coverage? His subsequent recording of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1 was the first classical LP to sell a million. That and the follow-up of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto, with all their imperfections, remain among the most viscerally exciting performances of the works on disc. I grew up with them, and it was Van Cliburn who later introduced me to Prokofiev's Third Concerto and MacDowell's Second in no less thrilling accounts.

If I dwell on these achievements, it is because nothing I have heard of Van Cliburn since has come close to them. Last year, Testament released a two-disc set of his only London recital given just a year after the competition (5/10). I was disappointed – and surprised, too – by his playing on that occasion, with its cautious tempi and muted emotions (*pace* Prokofiev's Sixth Sonata), characteristic also of these two live concerto performances. Commanding as they are, I can't help wondering, were one to listen to them blind, whether they would seem like the

work of the same remarkable pianist heard in the four concertos mentioned above.

Recorded within days of each other in April 1960 by RCA (now Sony BMG), neither has been published previously. The reasons are unclear: it could hardly be because of a few inaccuracies and the barely noticeable omission of half a bar in the first movement (1'23") of the Brahms noted in the booklet essay. The recorded sound is fine for its time, though Orchestra Hall, Chicago, is less resonant with a full house than when empty, as comparison with the "studio" recordings of both these works with the same conductor and orchestra reveals, the Schumann made four days after the present concert, the Brahms just over a year later. And if the slightly faster tempi in the 1961 Brahms had obtained in this live recording, both concertos could have squeezed on to a single disc. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Brahms

Piano Concerto No 2, Op 83^a.

Variations on a Theme by Paganini, Op 35^b.

Hungarian Dances – No 1; No 2; No 4

Boris Berezovsky *pf*

^aUral Philharmonic Orchestra / Dmitri Liss

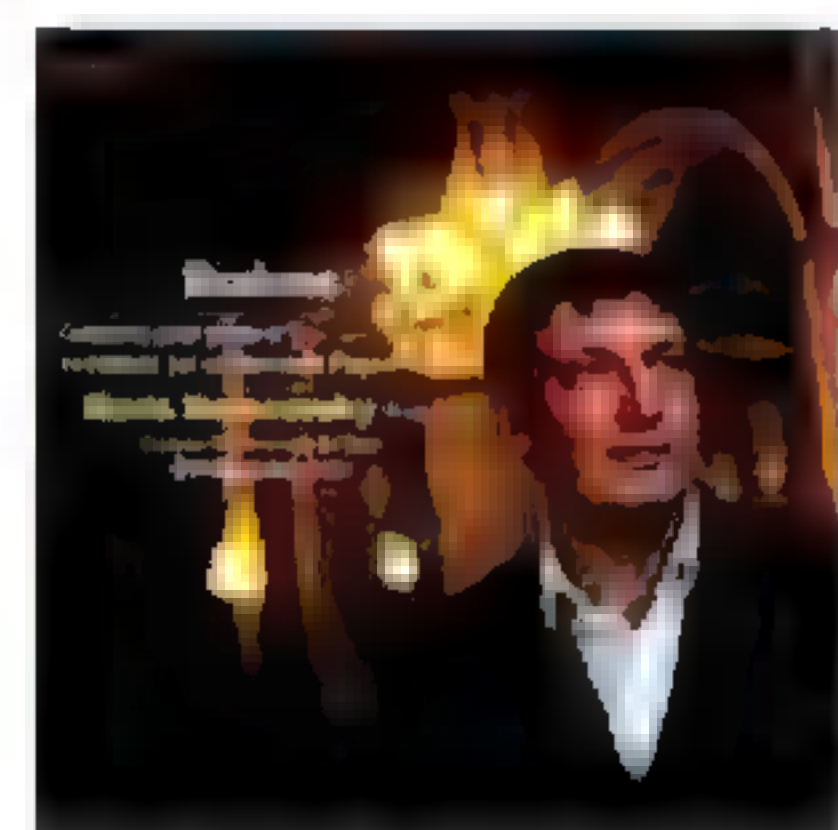
Mirare Ⓢ MIR132 (61' • DDD)

^aRecorded live

Selected comparison:

Angelich, Frankfurt Rad SO, P Järvi (9/10) (VIRG) 266349-2

A pianist with virtuosity to burn but a one-dimensional reading of a great concerto



Boris Berezovsky delivers the notes of the B flat Concerto with Olympian ease. What the gods bestowed on him doesn't, however, include empathy for the richness

and multifariousness of Brahms. With tempi pressed ever harder in the quick movements, the concerto is traversed rather than interpreted, and there's little exploration of the music behind the notes. Nicholas Angelich's recording gives us variousness and subtleties, and an ideal balance of grandeur and intimacy throughout, but none of that's on offer here. This is the concerto as a high-octane virtuoso number. It made me wonder whether Tchaikovsky, who loathed Brahms, might have enjoyed it played this way.

Connoisseurs of piano-playing will find plenty to astonish them and I do not discount the musical pleasures that fluency and beauty of sound of this order can bring. But oh dear, the wood and the trees. The dimensions of the territory are on view but the terrain has received little in the way of nurture – and it might be said a lot of the trees appear to have been felled. The slipshod detail becomes an increasing irritation: try the opening of the finale, where the articulation of the dotted rhythm comes out almost as a triplet. Hard to overlook, too, are the many faults of internal



Sigurd Slåttembrekk: zest, freshness and freedom

At home WITH GRIEG

The Steinway at Trolldhaugen comes to life once more

Grieg

Piano Concerto, Op 16^a. Lyric Pieces – Butterfly, Op 43 No 1; To Spring, Op 43 No 6; Norwegian March, Op 54 No 2; Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen, Op 65 No 6; Remembrances, Op 71 No 7. Ballade, Op 24. Humoreske, Op 6 No 2. The Bridal Procession Passes, Op 19 No 2. Piano Sonata, Op 7 – Alla menuetto; Finale.

Sigurd Slåttembrekk, Edvard Grieg *pf*

^aOslo Philharmonic Orchestra /

Michail Jurowski

Simax Ⓢ Ⓢ PSC1299 (108' • ADD/DDD)

Disc 2 contains Grieg's recordings of the solo works (except the Ballade) transferred from his 1903 acoustic recordings. Includes a version of 'Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen' edited between Grieg's and Slåttembrekk's recordings, and a transfer of the 1930s reissue of the 1903 'To Spring'



Here on this handsomely presented and generously illustrated two-disc album is a true labour of love. Inspired by Edvard Grieg's own playing, recorded in Paris in 1903, native Norwegian Sigurd Slåttembrekk and his "creative director" Tony Harrison seek to recreate a bygone performance style and tradition. In a detailed and extended essay they lament today's smoothing-out of those

tensions, nuances and intricacies inseparable from yesteryear's great performances (they cite Rachmaninov, Rubinstein and Cortot, but also Martha Argerich, whose daring, sweep and charisma are of both the present and past). They seek to emulate rather than imitate such vibrant music-making. Tempi are invariably on the brisk side and Grieg's own performances, heard very much through a glass darkly, are of a zest, freshness and freedom that themselves are at the heart of Slåttembrekk's playing. His way with the Piano Concerto is magnificently assured and free of self-serving idiosyncrasy but it is in the Ballade that he achieves his greatest stature and distinction.

All lovers of Grieg's piano music will know Eileen Joyce's early selection of *Lyric Pieces* (Testament, 9/99), Gilels's awareness of "a whole new world of intimate feeling" (the pianist's own touching words – DG, 2/97) and, most recently, the recordings of Leif Ove Andsnes (EMI, 4/02). Yet even they hardly equal Slåttembrekk's expressive intensity and scintillating virtuosity. Here Grieg steps out to produce a work of epic grandeur and Slåttembrekk's way with its flashing northern lights and final desolate leave-taking are unforgettable. Played on Grieg's 1892 Steinway in Trolldhaugen, these performances are of a moving poetic empathy and musical devotion. **Bryce Morrison**

Orchestral reviews

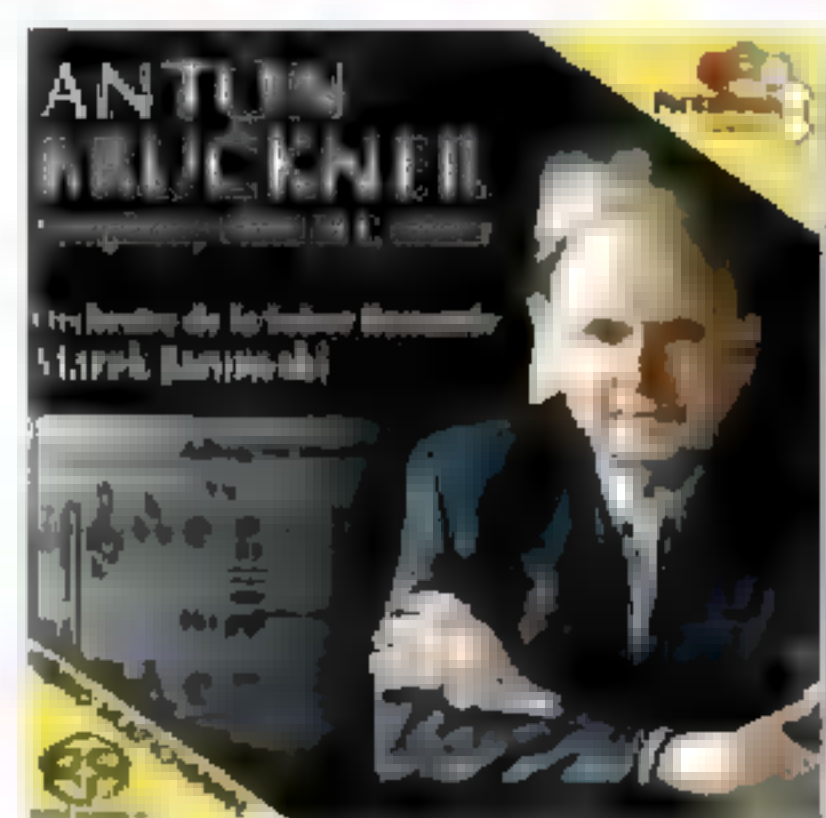
balance. The orchestra is valiant but lacks first-desk principals of quality, and the bass-heavy sound tends to be muddy.

The second book of *Paganini Variations* gives us more of the same. Berezovsky, flying by the seat of his pants, displays an agility few could rival but the performance is one-dimensional and the manner of it heartless. I recall with pleasure the exceptional quality of some of Berezovsky's other recordings, when his heart and mind have been engaged, but I don't think anyone could claim this is among them. **Stephen Plalstow**

Bruckner

Symphony No 8 (1890 version, ed Nowak)
Suisse Romande Orchestra / Marek Janowski
Pentatone ⑤ PTC5186 371 (80' • DSD/DDD)

Plenty of personalities to contend with here but Janowski prioritises the music



As an interpreter of Bruckner, Marek Janowski steers a straight centre course, avoiding both what you might call marmoreal posturing (Karajan, Celibidache) and the vicissitudes of mood and tempo that characterise the interpretations of (for example) Furtwängler, Jochum and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Kubelík. Janowski's approach is more along the lines of Volkmar Andreae, Hans Rosbaud, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and Kurt Masur, and this Eighth is a good example of how well that approach can work.

Interesting that the first two movements seem slower than they actually are: both fall short of the quarter-hour mark and yet the weight of tone, consistency of tempo and the general preference for linear rather than shapely phrasing (especially in the opening phrases) lead to a certain feeling of measured austerity. The second and third movements work best. Listen to the almost tactile brush of resin across the basses at the start of the *Adagio*, then follow the cellos from 12'09", their dialogue with the violins and, later, the brass, the way Janowski allows the music to breathe, never pushing the tempo or excessively holding back to heighten the expressive effect (ie for the brass at 13'53").

Janowski coaxes the basses to lean heavily for the build-up towards the cathartic central climax at 15'51", and the impact of the climax itself is overwhelming. I don't think I've ever heard the finale bound in at a more perfectly judged tempo, accelerating almost imperceptibly for the opening bars, then steadying so that brass make their full effect. And when the opening motif returns at 14'10", there's the fury of the string-playing, rendered all the more effective because the episodes that surround this crucial passage have been so well prepared, tempo-wise –

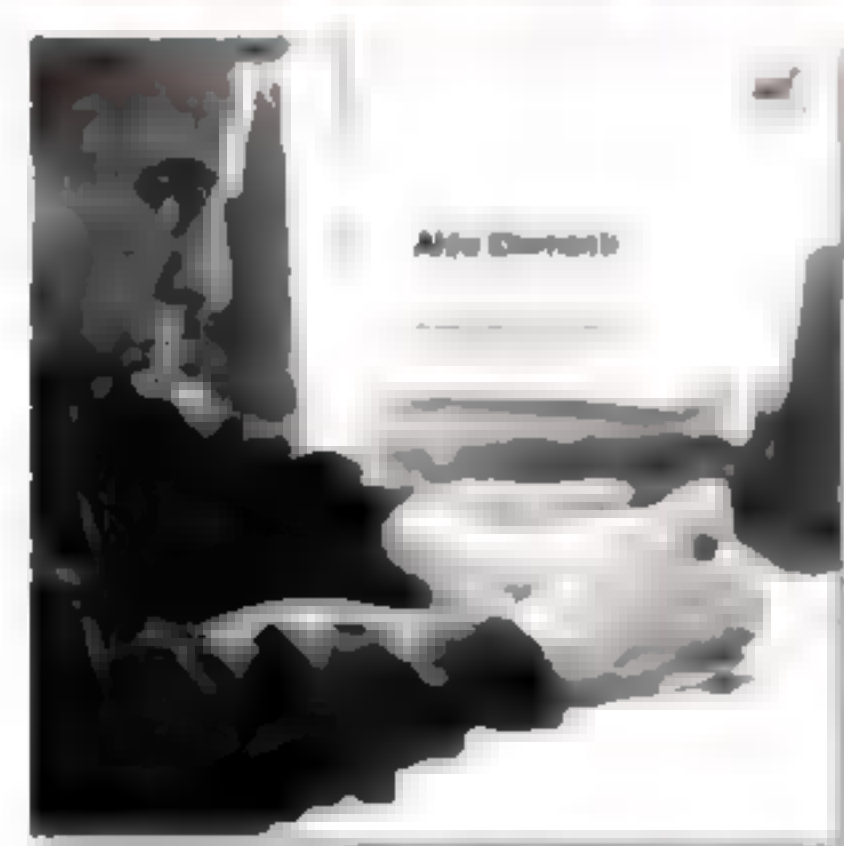
breadth, control and precision being obvious priorities. The sound is excellent, the woodwinds (the bassoon especially) always clear, although at times I would have welcomed more prominently focused timpani.

Just where Janowski's Eighth stands in the overall scheme of things will be largely down to personal taste. If you prefer looser limbs and greater agility, with a few flames added, then Kubelík's 1977 Bavarian Radio broadcast (BR-Klassik) is unbeatable. Furtwängler, whether in Vienna or Berlin, takes a similar approach a few steps further and pushes on the heat in the process, while Skrowaczewski (Arte Nova) marries breadth with visceral excitement. Karajan's huge sonorities in Berlin (EMI, DG) and Maazel's ecstatic projection in Munich (BR-Klassik, 2/11) both warrant close attention – and those are just some of the best representatives in a huge, heady crowd of options spread across various editions of the score. Still, Janowski (who uses the familiar 1890 version edited by Leopold Nowak) neither exaggerates nor falsifies, so I can't imagine anyone who isn't especially concerned with strongly personalised interpretation being disappointed. **Rob Cowan**

A Clementi

Fantasia su roBerto FABbriCiAni. Ouverture. Passacaglia. luCiAno BErio. Parafrasi 2
Roberto Fabbricciani fls Alvisé Vidolin elec
Mode ⑤ MODE224 (50' • DDD)

Clementi's canons defy gravity and make for alluring music



Those post-1945 Italians we hear about most – Berio, Nono, Maderna – all needed their fix of serial thinking in the morning even if, like Maderna, serialism

became a methodology to push against rather than to embrace wholeheartedly. But Aldo Clementi, who died as this issue was in preparation, belonged to a select enclave of Italian composers (hello Franco Donatoni and Niccolò Castiglioni) whose love-hate feelings about the 12-tone mother music jumped them into a root-and-branch review of the relationship between pitch, form and time flow. Clementi began working with networks of interlaced canons that sent canopies of sound gliding, rotating, spacewalking through his music, leaving listeners' perceptions triumphantly disorientated.

It could have all been different had Clementi's canons obeyed the customary rules, but by piling canons on top of more canons – a snowblinding counterpoint of canon against canon – he defied harmonic gravity. Depending on how the overlaps work out, notes lose their point-to-point function but fundamental tonics and passing chromatics still sound like themselves anyway.

Writing for an unaccompanied instrument obliges him to fake it. *Fantasia su roBerto FABbriCiAni* (1980-81) started life as a solo flute composition, with the player zig-zagging around a four-part canon mapped out over two staves. Studio magic engineers a 24-part "sequel" here, as the flautist plays against six taped recordings of himself; *Passacaglia* for flute with flutes on tape (1988) hooks fragments of Bach, Schubert and Mozart into a canonic grid system; *luCiAno BErio* (1995) evokes Webern's mirror canons.

This massed flute music is mesmerising in the extreme, yet one conceptual niggle bothers me. The ear obsesses inevitably on the live contribution over the filigree texture of canons underneath, which can sound incidental and under-composed. And, given Clementi's intense compositional micromanagement, some might say that's an inconsistency, and they would almost certainly be right. But the music's alluring enough sonically for this not to matter too much. **Phillip Clark**

Copland • Ives

Copland Symphony for Organ and Orchestra^a
Ives/Brant A Concord Symphony^b

^aPaul Jacobs org San Francisco Symphony
Orchestra / Michael Tilson Thomas

SFS Media ⑤ SFS0038 (77' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live, ^bFebruary 3-6, ^aSeptember 22-25, 2010

A neglected American symphony and an orchestration of Ives's fearsome sonata



Copland's Organ Symphony is astonishingly mature for the 24-year-old composer. It was dedicated to Nadia Boulanger, the teacher

Copland idolised, and she gave the first performances in New York early in 1925. She might have told him of a few bits of eccentric layout for the organ but it's still an outstanding piece in the repertoire, utterly characteristic, and ought to be a classic. The remastered 1967 recording with E Power Biggs and the New York Symphony under Bernstein (Sony) still stands up well but Paul Jacobs faultlessly exploits this fine score. With this degree of drama, eloquence and style, it's the ideal recording of this incomprehensibly neglected work.

Henry Brant, who died three years ago, worked on his orchestration of Ives's iconic masterpiece, the Second Piano Sonata, *Concord, Mass, 1840-60*, from 1958 to 1995. Brant said he wasn't planning to create "a characteristically complex Ives orchestral texture" but the result, which must have been an enormous labour, is fearsomely cluttered in the first two movements, "Emerson" and "Hawthorne". "The Alcotts" is gentler but Brant misses its spacious climax and, in the

final "Thoreau", again surprisingly fails to follow Ives's own tempo markings. Ives would not have written this kind of music on an orchestral scale: it belongs to one man on his own, steeped in the New England transcendentalist writers and pushing the frontiers of piano music beyond anything he or anybody else knew. But Brant has added an imposing document to the Ives repertoire and these two live recordings are a stunning success. **Peter Dickinson**

Halvorsen

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3'

Bergensiana. Black Swans. Fossegrimen, Op 21^b. Symphony No 3. Wedding March, Op 32 No 1^a. Wedding of Ravens in the Grove of the Crows

^aMarianne Thorsen *vn* ^bRagnhild Hemsing *hardanger fiddle* Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos © CHAN10664 (80' • DDD)

Chandos's third Halvorsen disc blends the familiar with the barely known



The Third (1928-30) – and last – of Halvorsen's symphonies, given here as in previous volumes in Jørn Fossheim's new edition, is in many respects his most personal. After the drama and gravity of the first two, No 3 follows a less standard profile. The first movement plays "now you see me, now you don't" with sonata form, with a *Poco andante* introduction; the slow movement has an embedded *scherzo*; while the finale uses a glockenspiel – a radical step too far for the composer, who crossed it out after the premiere. Fossheim's restoration is a minor revelation.

The other major work here is the "dramatic suite" extracted from Halvorsen's hugely successful score to Sigurd Eldegard's play about the folk fiddler Torgeir Augunsson and the troll-demon Fossegrimen. Torgeir is represented by the Hardanger fiddle, the nine-stringed, ornate Norwegian folk violin which Halvorsen also played. Ragnhild Hemsing is the nimble-fingered soloist, most vividly in the concluding "Fanitullen". This account features the "Danse visionaire" which the composer eventually replaced. Marianne Thorsen – who featured majorly in Vol 2 – returns in the delightful *Wedding March*, one of his most popular pieces. It makes an effective contrast between the pale impressionism of *Black Swans* (1921; none the less controversial in Norway at the time) and the folk arrangement *Wedding of Ravens in the Grove of the Crows*.

The Bergen Philharmonic under Järvi respond with commitment throughout, relishing the challenges of the music as much as the opportunity to showcase it, nowhere more so than in *Bergensiana* (1921), a set of

variations on an "old tune" possibly derived from Lully. Top-notch Chandos sound completes a splendid, jam-packed disc.

Guy Rickards

Kodály - Bartók - Ligeti

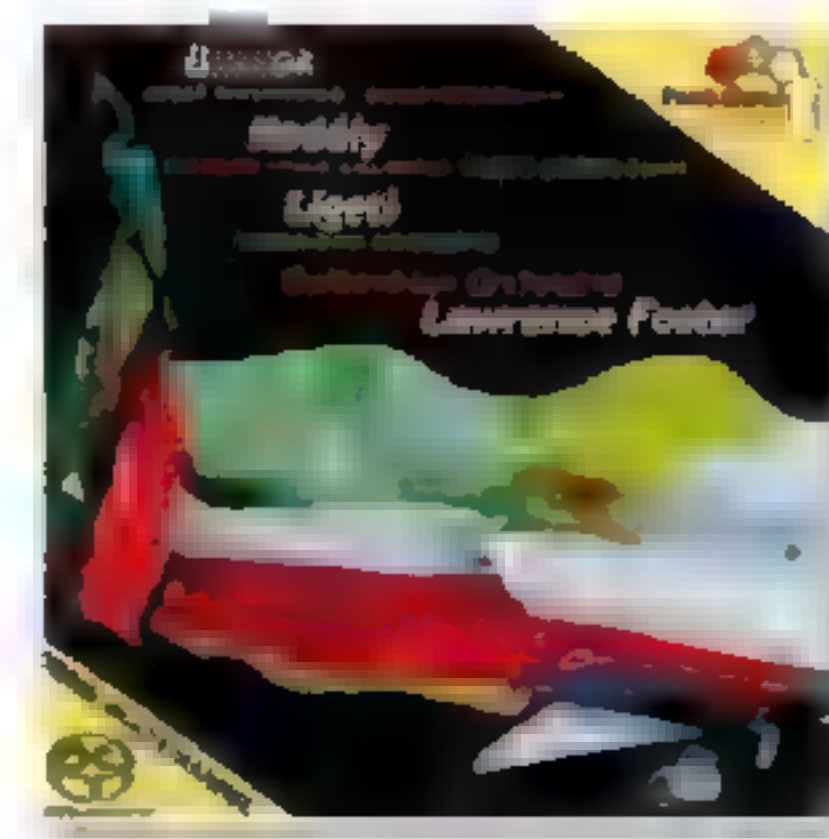
Bartók Two Portraits, Sz37. Rhapsody No 1, Sz87 Kodály Dances of Galánta. Háry János – Suite, Op 15 Ligeti Concert Românesc

Gulbenkian Orchestra / Lawrence Foster

Pentatone © PTC5186 360 (77' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Grande Auditório of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, November 2009

A Hungarian programme yields detailed performances from Portuguese players



An appealing Eastern-flavoured musical salad this, and a fairly approachable sampling of what music from the region sounded like up to the middle of the last century. Lawrence Foster directs warm, attentively phrased performances, often rich in detail – the expressive centre of Kodály's *Háry János* Intermezzo, for example, and the middle dance sequences of the *Galánta* Dances. Maybe Iván Fischer and his Budapest Festival players (Hungaroton) display a firmer bite where bite is needed but there's no lack of energy in Bartók's Second Portrait (with its very prominent timps), nor in the faster section of Ligeti's *Romanian Concerto*, an early work that opens rather in the manner of Foster's beloved Enescu. I liked the Gulbenkian concertmaster Mihaela Costea's casually off-the-beat playing of the expressive opening of the First Portrait, though the phased strings that follow her lead are at times just a little too quiet. *Háry János* is given a spirited, extrovert performance with an impressive show of vividly recorded percussion and plenty of tenderness in the "Song". So, a satisfying programme if the sequence appeals, though I'd hesitate to nominate any one item as a "benchmark" recording. **Rob Cowan**

Mahler

Symphony No 5

Sydney Symphony Orchestra /

Vladimir Ashkenazy

Sydney Symphony © SSO201003 (72' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall, May 19-24, 2010

Downbeat Mahler from Down Under – a strangely noncommittal Fifth Symphony



Mahler marks the opening *Trauermarsch* of his Fifth Symphony with the words "With measured pace, stern, like a funeral procession". But there's

so much more to it than that. The character of the sound, for one thing: the way in which the reediness and plangency of the woodwinds impacts on that sound; and the accents which shape and define it. Ashkenazy gives us the measured pace all right but the character is so glossed over, the woodwinds so well blended into uniform greyness, and the accenting so incidental as to convey only anonymity. There's a world of difference between weary and dreary. And even that sudden venting of outrage at the heart of the movement feels strangely noncommittal. Mahler was never that.

I do wish recordings would start acknowledging Mahler's contention that the second movement is intrinsically the flipside of the first and that, if not *attacca*, its stormy invective should follow swiftly. But significant pause or not, the problem is again Ashkenazy's lack of impulse, with the generous acoustic of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall further compromising the rhythmic snap of the music. The engineers go for the big picture over immediacy, while Ashkenazy slackens the surge of despondency to the point where it begins to sound like Strauss. It just doesn't seem to be going anywhere any time soon and that tingling trumpet-topped premonition of the symphony's blazingly affirmative close passes by with little or no sense of its importance.

The Sydney Symphony's sumptuous first horn makes quite a showing in the big *Scherzo* but, in such a volatile movement, Ashkenazy seems always to be playing catch-up with the music, and those moments which spring so exultantly into overdrive are simply too deliberate to convey a sudden quickening of the senses. Ashkenazy is best in the various manifestations of the somewhat charmless *Ländler* – but even there he's in danger of grinding to a halt. He actually does so midway through the *Adagietto*, rendering it so sticky and halting that this wistful love letter pretty much gets lost in the post. Nor does the airy transformation of its music in the finale achieve the uplift we might have hoped for. This makes three individual symphony releases in the Sydney cycle; hopefully there is better to come.

Edward Seckerson

Mahler

Symphony No 8

Julia Varady, Jane Eaglen, Susan Bullock

sops Trudeliese Schmidt, Jadwiga Rappé *contrs*

Kenneth Riegel *ten* Eike Wilm Schulte *bar* Hans

Sotin *bass* Eton College Boys' Choir; London

Symphony Chorus; London Philharmonic

Choir and Orchestra / Klaus Tennstedt

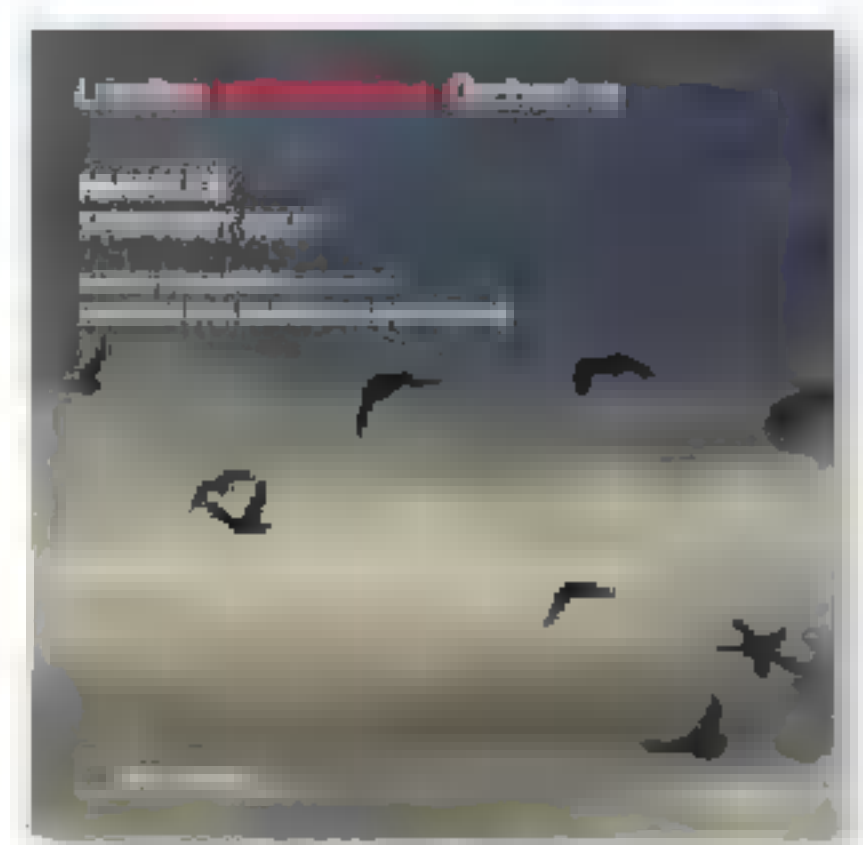
LPO © LPO0052 (87' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, January 27, 1991



Orchestral reviews

An overwhelming 'Symphony of a Thousand' from a natural Mahlerian



The Royal Festival Hall was never a natural venue for Mahler's Eighth Symphony, and I remember well how Klaus Tennstedt's choirs spilled from the choir stalls into the adjoining side stalls and how boxes were deployed to accommodate the offstage brass and, at the highest point, Susan Bullock's *Mater Gloriosa*. But what we lost in breadth and magnitude (the acoustic was much drier then) we gained in an all-enveloping and electrifying immediacy.

And so, with the biggest upbeat in music (and from days when the Festival Hall organ was complete!), Mahler's hymnic invocation swept all before it. It was almost as if Tennstedt was striving to compensate for the constrictive sound of the hall by building the spatial perspective into his reading. Come the mighty development, he takes the text "Accende lumen sensibus" ("Inflame our senses with light") at absolutely face value. As the fervour mounts to fever pitch – his sopranos Julia Varady and Jane Eaglen hurling out top Cs like they could be the last they ever sing – one almost doesn't notice that the tempo is getting broader and broader. Tennstedt is one of the few conductors in my experience to almost convince me that impetus has nothing to do with speed. And, of course, though there is no *ritardando* marked in the momentous bars leading to the point of recapitulation, Tennstedt (who was nothing if not a traditionalist) is having none of it – the heavens duly open but in the certain knowledge that they will do so again, only bigger, with the Chorus Mysticus.

Part 2 begins with a *poco adagio* which, thanks to the kind of high-intensity string-playing only Tennstedt could elicit from the LPO, tugs at the emotional fabric of the music as few dared to do. To some it will feel overwrought, to most (or at least to staunch Mahlerians) it will be another instance of Tennstedt's total identification with this music. His painting of the Faust scene is characteristically craggy, with the arrival of the Doctor's heavenly escort prompting angelic high jinks far rougher and readier in tone than in some accounts. So, too, the casting of the male soloists, with Kenneth Riegel's Doctor Marianus eschewing head voice for an often pained rendition of the cruelly high tessitura.

But as the *Mater Gloriosa* duly floats into view (the lovely Susan Bullock) and the force of love becomes unstoppable, Tennstedt is overwhelming. Try topping the orchestral peroration, offstage trumpets stretching the "Veni, Creator Spiritus" motif from the

interval of a fifth beyond the octave to a heaven-storming ninth. **Edward Seckerson**

Mozart

Symphonies – Nos 39, K543; No 41, 'Jupiter', K551

English Baroque Soloists / John Eliot Gardiner

Soli Deo Gloria Ⓢ SDG711 (67' • DDD)

Recorded live at Cadogan Hall, London, February 9, 2006

K543 – selected comparison:

Gardiner (2/91) (PHIL) 426 282-2PH

K551 – selected comparison:

Gardiner (11/92) (PHIL) 426 315-2PH

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Mackerras (4/08) (LINN) CKD308

Live returns to two late symphonies catch Gardiner in attractively lyrical vein



Over 20 years after his first recordings of these symphonies, John Eliot Gardiner appears to have heeded Leopold Mozart's words: "Each tempo, slow or fast, has its gradations." Look to the slow movements first and the dotted semiquaver/demi-semiquaver opening theme of No 39. Its rising phrases are sinuously inflected, in stark contrast to the sharply accented ones in the F minor transition to the second subject. Yielding lyricism gives way to tighter control. Gardiner's lack of rigidity expresses changes, yet the music moves at the prescribed *Andante con moto*. He's no different in the *Andante cantabile* of No 41 with muted violins and violas; and, again, a tense transition to the second subject.

The other movements have gradations too. The Minuet of No 39 is more expansive than of yore, Gardiner even allowing Rachel Becket (flute) and Guy Cowley (clarinet) to embellish their parts in the Trio. And, despite rapid tempi, both finales have nuances not heard in the previous recordings. This time Gardiner doesn't repeat the second part of No 41's finale but he is still mightily impressive. Indeed, impressive performances all round but the full might of the orchestra hasn't been captured: bassoons, cellos and basses are ill-defined. Nevertheless, this is a fine adjunct to Charles Mackerras, who sets the scene with a brazen double-dotted introduction to No 39. And the splendour of Linn's SACD recording does his dynamic interpretations proud. **Nalen Anthoni**

Rózsa

Hungarian Nocturne, Op 28. Overture to a Symphony Concert, Op 26a. Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra, Op 3a.

Three Hungarian Sketches, Op 14

Mark Kosower vs Budapest Symphony

Orchestra MÁV / Mariusz Smolij

Naxos Ⓢ 8 572285 (57' • DDD)

Hungarian Sketches, Overture – selected comparison:

BBC PO, Gamba (11/08) (CHAN) CHAN10488

Four colourful works from the Hungarian plains – including a premiere recording



Naxos's trawl through Rózsa's orchestral and *concertante* works reaches its third instalment with a real rarity: the premiere recording of the early Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra, composed in 1929 at the end of Rózsa's student days. It is an apprentice piece, undeniably, the mature voice not yet fully realised despite clear indications of what was to come. Its arch-form design encompasses swings of mood and pace that the later master would control with greater aplomb. Mark Kosower is the ardent soloist, ably supported by an orchestra founded (uniquely, I believe) by a State Railway!

Mariusz Smolij elicits fine playing from his musicians, though, in the superb *Hungarian Sketches* (1938, here in their revised form from the late 1950s), their orchestral style tends more to the cinematic than did the BBC Philharmonic, which has the tauter, more refined ensemble. Although the composer disavowed any programme for *Overture to a Symphony Concert* (1956, rev 1963), this darkly impressive piece owes much of its atmosphere to the events of the Hungarian Uprising. By contrast, the *Hungarian Nocturne* (1963) is more reserved in tone, a fine nature poem, largely (and uncharacteristically) quiet for much of its 10-minute span.

The performances, if a touch syrupy in tone, are well articulated and more than serviceable. Naxos's sound is typically clear, albeit without the warmth of Chandos. If I had to recommend a single disc of Rózsa's orchestral pieces I would still plump for Gamba's – not least for the magnificent *Tripartita* – but, that said, this Naxos disc is a bargain at the price. **Guy Rickards**

Schmitt • Franck

Franck Symphony

Schmitt La tragédie de Salomé, Op 50

Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra /

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

ATMA Classique Ⓢ ACD2 2647 (71' • DDD)

Music from a French Salome ballet inspired by Strauss's bloodthirsty opera



The heady, smouldering atmosphere of Florent Schmitt's *La tragédie de Salomé* is impressively caught here by the Montreal-based Orchestre Métropolitain and its principal conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Originally conceived as an



EDITOR'S
CHOICE

hour-length ballet, *La tragédie de Salomé* was triggered by the Paris premiere of Richard Strauss's opera in 1907 but based on a less graphic representation of Wilde's play conceived by Robert d'Humières, man of letters and director of the Théâtre des Arts. Schmitt wrote the music and three years later cut it in half to make this symphonic poem. It is a taut piece but one with a broad dramatic sweep, in which Schmitt was able to exercise his interests in exotic music, expound his skills as an orchestrator and even pre-empt Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in writing music of rhythmic pungency and violence for the final "Danse de l'effroi". All these facets come to light in this vivid but finely judged interpretation, one in which the orchestral palette is perceptively deployed and Schmitt's evocations of oppressive stillness are as telling as his more frightening statements about Salome's state of mind.

César Franck's Symphony in D makes for an intelligent coupling, not merely because hints of its harmonic language carried over into Schmitt's own vocabulary but chiefly because it presents drama of an abstract nature that contrasts markedly with Schmitt's more theatrically based score. Nézet-Séguin has a strong grasp of the symphony's structure, its ebb and flow of dynamics and pace, and its rich spectrum of orchestral colouring. **Geoffrey Norris**

Shostakovich

Symphonies – No 1, Op 10;

No 3, Op 20, 'The First of May'

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko

Naxos © 8 572396 (65' • DDD)

Sym No 3 – selected comparison:

Bavarian Rad SO, Jansons (EMI) 356830-2

Petrenko pulls his punches in two early Shostakovich symphonies

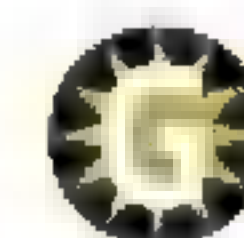


Petrenko's Shostakovich cycle continues with an account of the First Symphony that appreciates both its mischief and its soulfulness. Superbly

characterful contributions from his woodwind section help to bring both those dimensions to life, while Petrenko's grasp of the broader picture helps to keep the balance between them. Only once does that grasp briefly desert him, when he takes the Trio section of the second movement (where flutes and clarinets evoke a mock pilgrims' procession) so slowly that the symphonic flow is damaged – not irreparably but enough to discourage me from listening again.

Similarly, there are dozens of delightful details in Petrenko's account of *The First of May* Symphony but his structural pacing is more seriously open to question. The

For Wang, the beach isn't complete without a piano



Rach Two WANG STYLE

The artist who has wowed the piano world goes big

Rachmaninov

Piano Concerto No 2, Op 18.

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op 43

Yuja Wang *pf*

Mahler Chamber Orchestra /

Claudio Abbado

DG © 477 9308GH (56' • DDD)



Every new release by this marvellously gifted pianist is eagerly anticipated, none more than this, billed as "her first

concerto recording" (if you missed her playing the Mendelssohn G minor Concerto with Masur on DVD – 1/11 – snap it up). The two works are not Abbado's natural habitat but he recorded both of them once before (for CBS in 1983) with Cecile Licad who, curiously, was then 22 years old – the same age as Yuja Wang is now.

The first time I listened to this recording I was impressed by the *Paganini* Rhapsody and less so by the

Concerto, not from any concerns about Wang's handling of the work but because of the muddy bass sound, the frequent emphasising of secondary material at the expense of the soloist's audibility and a lack of purpose in the first movement (Abbado takes a sluggish view of the *maestoso/alla marcia* section), a far cry from the clarity and sweep of Earl Wild (1965 in superb sound – Chandos). By the third hearing I was less distracted by these reservations and more ready to admire Wang's exquisitely limpid phrasing (such as the six bars at 7'15" in the last movement) and the rest of her heartfelt performance.

The technical demands of the Rhapsody (Variation 24 for example) hold no terrors for her, of course, and her trademark impetuosity, which she injects into the bravura variations, is thrilling. But, more importantly, she is also an artist with that unteachable ability to tug at the emotions without recourse to sentimentality, as her playing of the famous Variation 23 beautifully illustrates. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Orchestral reviews

opening clarinet solo, for instance, may be beautifully inflected but it is so far away from the marked tempo that the first *accelerando* has the feeling of an emergency catch-up. Thereafter everything stays on track for a while, and the sense of enthusiasm bordering on fanaticism – surely germane, whichever way you care to “read” the piece ideologically – is superbly realised, until an unmarked slowing for the side-drum tattoo dissipates much of the excitement. Having said that, much in the late stages is outstandingly fine, including the RLPO Chorus’s more than plausible impersonation of ardent revolutionaries.

With the exception of the trumpets’ reluctance (or is it Petrenko’s?) to drive home climaxes – not a fault of Jansons’s account of the Third Symphony, for one – the internal balance and overall sound-picture are exceptionally fine. At bargain price, Naxos’s offering is hardly bettered. **David Fanning**

Sibelius

Symphony No 2, Op 43. Karelia Suite, Op 11
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra / Pietari Inkinen

Naxos © 8 572704 (62' • DDD)

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Philh Orch, Ashkenazy (DECC) 455 402-2DF2

Karelia Suite – selected comparison:

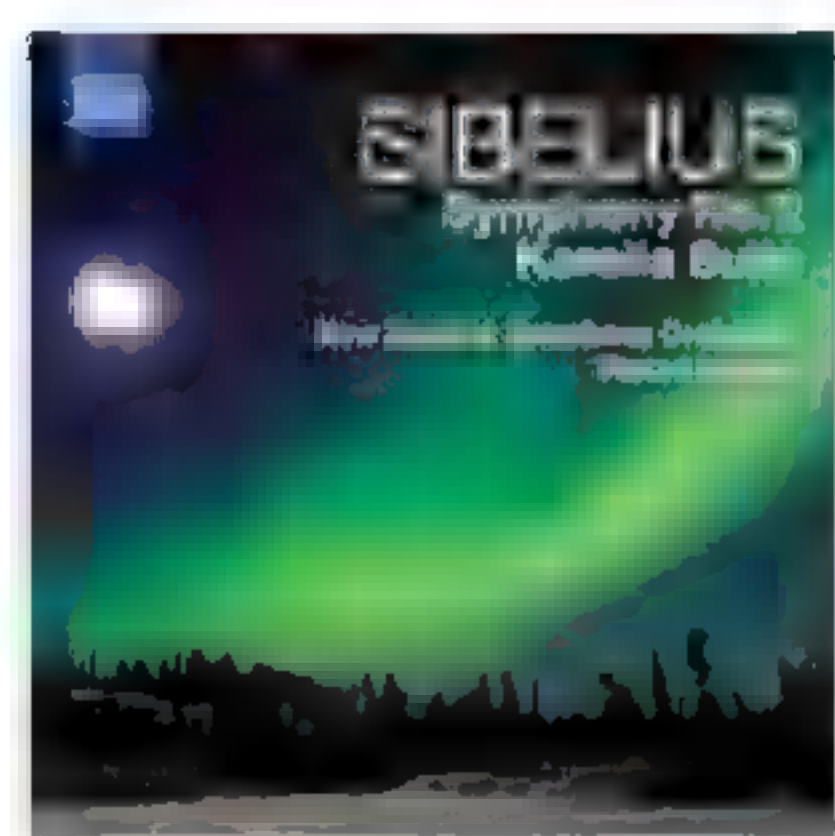
Gothenburg SO, N Järvi (3/85) (BIS) BIS-CD250

Symphony – selected comparisons:

Gothenburg SO, N Järvi (10/84) (BIS) BIS-CD252

LSO, C Davis (6/07) (LSO) LSO0105

Inkinen’s Sibelius cycle continues with a Second that bears up well



Few premieres prove to be truly national events but that of Sibelius’s Second Symphony in 1902, given amid burgeoning Finnish nationalism and

discontent with Tsarist rule, was undeniably one – a work that still, for all its familiarity, lives up to its hype. Yet Sibelius did not intend to compose a political piece (darker literary and personal shadows lie behind much of the score) which merely reflected the charged atmosphere of the time. The Second’s legacy is wholly musical.

Inkinen takes a holistic approach to the work, avoiding playing overtly to the gallery – even in the grandiose final hymn – while being alive to the drama in each movement. His account generates great momentum although the pace is not that fast: at 44’16” Inkinen may outstrip Davis yet is nearly two minutes behind Järvi, so tempo is not the whole story here. In any case, neither holds a candle to Kajanus, who took under 39’ in 1930 (Finlandia, 10/96 – nla). The New Zealanders give a fine account of the works and themselves, and if they do not surpass

any of the very personally selected rival versions above (the Gothenburgers have more fire, the LSO and Philharmonia more finesse), their particular orchestral blend and Inkinen’s fine direction make this, at the price, keenly competitive.

The symphony is followed by a somewhat relaxed *Karelia Suite*, feeling exactly right following the intensity of No 2. Again, tempi are deceptive, the newcomer not appreciably different to Järvi or the beautifully played Ashkenazy (originally paired with No 1, 5/86). The orchestra certainly sound as if they enjoyed themselves and so should you in their company. **Guy Rickards**

Strauss

Eine Alpensinfonie, Op 64.

Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra / Andris Nelsons

Orfeo © C833 111A (61' • DDD)

Recorded live 2010

Alpine Sym – selected comparisons:

Weimar Staatskapelle, Wit (9/06) (NAXO) 8 557811

Royal Concertgebouw Orch, Jansons (A/08) (RCOL) RCO08006

Strauss’s Alpine journey in a stunning live traversal from Symphony Hall



As the richly sonorous evocation in the deep brass of “Night” and the blazing “Sunrise” demonstrate, leading naturally to the beginning of the

“Ascent”, the warmly expansive acoustics of Symphony Hall, Birmingham, seem admirably suited to this live performance of Strauss’s picturesquely spectacular tone-poem. On the evidence of their playing here, since Andris Nelsons took over the CBSO from Rattle and Oramo the orchestra has reached new heights.

Nelsons tells us that he associates the music of the *Alpine Symphony* “more with imaginative moments than with concrete imagery, with the mountains taking on an expression of Creation in its boldest, most grandiose form, yet at the same time at its simplest, most naive, most artless”. Yet the orchestral detail he achieves in the gentler evocations, such as “On the Alpine pasture”, are as tellingly beautiful as the opening of “On the summit”, with its delicate oboe solo before its splendid climax; later, the preparation of “Calm” is haunting, before the “Storm” thunders in impressively. The music then returns spontaneously to the peacefully sustained “Night” sequence. The encore, Salome’s *Dance of the Seven Veils*, makes an effective contrast: sinuously, sexually feminine but not as voluptuous as some versions.

The main work has plenty of competition in the present catalogue, notably Mariss Janson’s vivid account with the Concertgebouw

Orchestra, coupled with a virile, passionate *Don Juan*, and a splendid super-budget version on Naxos by the Weimar Staatskapelle under Antoni Wit (without a coupling). But this new Orfeo disc holds its own – apart from irritatingly listing the symphony’s 22 titles, at the beginning of an otherwise well-documented CD, only in German.

Ivan March

Suk

Asrael, Op 27

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras

Supraphon © SU4043-2 (60' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Rudolfinum, Prague.

April 5 & 6, 2007

Selected comparisons:

Czech PO, Neumann (9/91^R) (SUPR) SU3864-2

RLPO, Pešek (9/91^R) (EMI) 206873-2

Czech PO, Bělohlávek (5/92) (CHAN) CHAN9640

Bavarian Rad SO, Kubelík (1/94) (PANT) 81 1101-2

Czech PO, Talich (11/06) (SUPR) SU3830-2

An Asrael from the heart that comes close to Talich’s classic recording



It’s always problematical when a new recording has to confront rivalry from an almost impossibly great benchmark – the de Sabata *Tosca*, for

example, or Britten’s own version of his *War Requiem*, Heifetz’s Korngold Concerto and, in this particular context, Václav Talich’s 1952 Czech Philharmonic recording of Josef Suk’s requiem “Symphony for Large Orchestra”, an epic work named after Asrael, the Angel of Death according to Islam, Sikhism and some Hebrew lore. Suk’s tragic prompt was twofold, initially the death of his father-in-law Dvořák and then, shortly afterwards, of his wife Otilka, at the age of 27. The symphony deals with “the struggle of life and death”, “loss”, Otilka herself and the futility of life, before hard-won acceptance marks a tentative but definite return to some semblance of normality. A bracing centrally placed *scherzo* has at its heart some of the most achingly beautiful music in the whole of Suk’s output.

Talich’s performance literally burns (there’s no other word for it) but the passing of time has taken its toll, sound-wise, and there are some aspects of the score – the eruptive, repeated bass-drum strokes from around 12’35” on this new recording – that by today’s digital standards lack clarity and impact. Sir Charles Mackerras actually learnt *Asrael* from Talich and this performance, recorded on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday 2007, betrays an almost symbiotic identification with the music – and for good reason. Sir Charles lost his daughter



Fiona to cancer during the same year: in fact, he conducted the finale of a Beethoven cycle merely hours after her death, so there's no questioning either the depth of his response (especially to the fourth-movement *Adagio*) or his understanding of the work's two-tier structure.

The Czech Phil play wonderfully well for him, much as they did for Jiří Bělohlávek and Václav Neumann, the former enjoying a warm, ambient recording, the latter sounding marginally brighter in tone, though neither quite matches Mackerras for overall intensity. I should also mention Rafael Kubelík, whose Munich performance is rather special (probably the greatest after Talich), and Libor Pešek with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, another credible contender. But this more recent Mackerras performance digs just that little bit deeper and for that reason edges nearest to the classics by Talich and Kubelík.

Rob Cowan

Suk

Fantasy, Op 24^a. Fairy Tale, Op 16.

Fantastic Scherzo, Op 25

^aMichael Ludwig *vn*

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra / JoAnn Falletta

Naxos © 8 572323 (69' • DDD)

Falletta's full-textured, warm-hearted approach delivers on many levels



Josef Suk's dramatic, 23-minute Fantasy in G minor opens like *Zampa* in a bad mood (remember Hérold's popular overture?), but the "storm and stress"

element soon gives way to a wealth of lyricism and writing that combines memorable themes with imaginative orchestration, nicely focused here by JoAnn Falletta and her players (note the prominent Buffalo horns at 1'23"). It's a cracker of a piece, with a particularly lovely theme at around 5'44" that cues a skipping, lightly syncopated variation, and a mass of attractive incident around and beyond.

Recordings of the Fantasy aren't exactly thick on the ground. A thrilling historical live version with Carl Flesch was released some years ago by Symposium; more recently, the alert and intelligent Pamela Frank with the Czech Philharmonic under Sir Charles Mackerras prepared a fine version (Decca, 12/05); while a few years earlier, Josef Suk (the composer's grandson) set down his compelling and memorably idiomatic interpretation with the Czech Philharmonic under Václav Neumann (Supraphon), crisper in outline and more voluptuous than this warm-blooded new version by Michael Ludwig and the Buffalo Philharmonic which delivers everything needed excepting, perhaps, a clinching degree of spontaneity. The

music that eventually emerged as *Fairy Tale* was composed some five years before the Fantasy, when Suk was still in his mid-twenties, and has in recent years established itself as one of the composer's most popular works. The first two movements are especially attractive and again JoAnn Falletta's full-textured, warm-hearted approach is a fair swap for the characteristic bite that Libor Pešek (Supraphon) and Jiří Bělohlávek (Chandos) achieve with the Czech Philharmonic. Likewise, Sir Charles Mackerras and the Czech Phil (Decca, 12/05) with the *Fantastic Scherzo*, a sort of "update" on Dvořák's *Scherzo capriccioso* and musically just as attractive. Naxos's recordings achieve a warmth and amplitude that suit the performances. **Rob Cowan**

Tchaikovsky

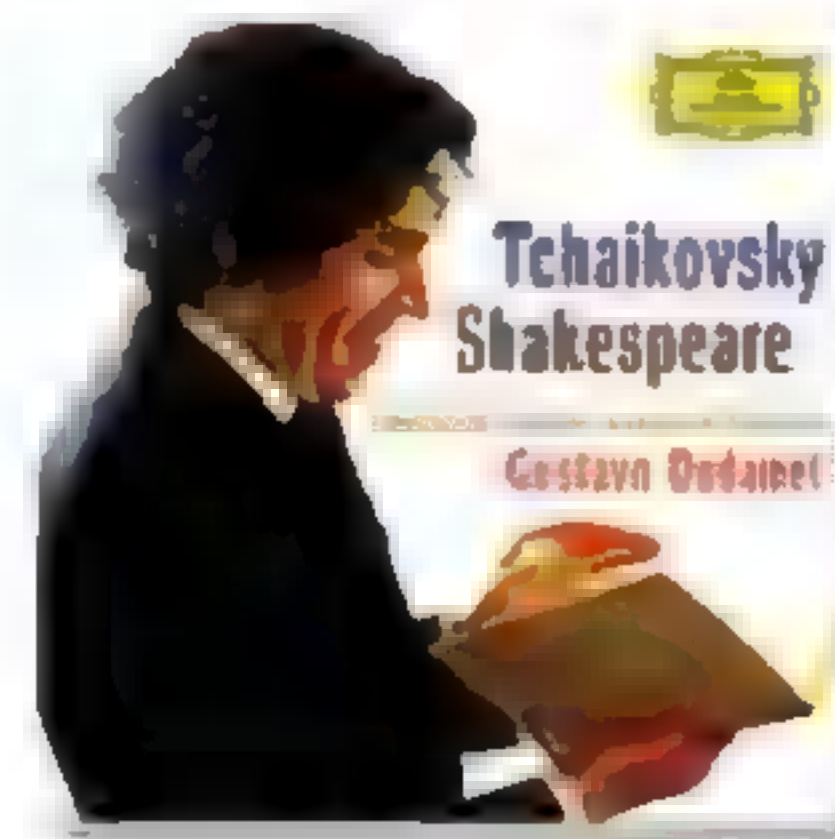
Hamlet, Op 67. Romeo and Juliet.

The Tempest, Op 18

Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela / Gustavo Dudamel

DG © 477 9355GH (65' • DDD)

One for acolytes of Dudamel only - and even they may feel a little short-changed



Hamlet comes first and is the most pleasing of the three items on Gustavo Dudamel's latest anthology with his youthful charges. It's a watchful, predominantly well-behaved affair, decently played, but it ignites only sporadically – and the last ounce of pathos remains elusive in the coda. By the side of, say, Nelsons's CBSO account (Orfeo, 10/09), there's a certain want of grip and organic purpose, shortcomings that become more apparent in *The Tempest* and surface with a vengeance in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Reacquaintance with Pletnev's reading of the former work (DG, 12/94) throws into sharp relief what's missing. It's not just the supreme poise and fabulous coordination displayed by the RNO (the Venezuelan winds in particular are lacking in sheer allure and characterful profile): the Russian keeps a firmer grasp on the structural tiller, the excitement generated by far shrewder interpretative means, not least some masterly pacing allied to a keen sense of proportion. Intermittent thrills aside, Dudamel's unhelpfully piecemeal conception can sound worryingly superficial by comparison.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the alarm bells are triggered early as Dudamel slams on the brakes at bar 11 (0'41") and again at bar 51 (3'20"), thereby scuppering the superbly ominous chill of Tchaikovsky's *molto meno mosso* marking at bar 95 (5'57") when the same material returns just prior to the main *Allegro giusto*. Nor do I care for the violins'

exaggeratedly pale tone from bar 191 onwards (9'27"). The fight music, too, is surprisingly heavy on its pins.

So there we have it. DG's engineering is full-bodied but could do with greater bloom and transparency; Simon Callow supplies a thoughtful booklet-essay. Bearing in mind the sensational impact of this same team's adrenalin-fuelled live performances of Tchaikovsky's Fifth and *Francesca da Rimini* (DG, 7/09), it's hard not to feel just a little underwhelmed. **Andrew Achenbach**

'Bonjour Paris'

Debussy *Préludes* – La fille aux cheveux de lin.

Clair de lune **d'Indy** Fantaisie sur des thèmes

populaires français, Op 31 **Fauré** Pavane, Op 50^a.

Sicilienne, Op 78^a **Françaix** L'horloge de flore

Hahn A Chloris^b **Odermatt** Eté, Op 18^a

Ravel Pavane pour une infante défunte

Satie Gymnopédie No 1^b

Albrecht Mayer *ob/ob d'amore/obcora* Academy of St Martin in the Fields / Mathias Mönius

Decca © 478 2564DH (74' • DDD)

Albrecht Mayer demonstrates his artistry in a programme of French favourites



Those who favour the sultry, seductive side of French music will relish this disc. Others might hanker after a little more *jeu d'esprit* to leaven it.

That said, German oboist Albrecht Mayer thankfully shuns the agonising jokiness that could sometimes afflict French composers in the early decades of the 20th century and his immaculate, mellifluous artistry is a marvel. However, with orchestral arrangements of Debussy's "La fille aux cheveux de lin" followed by Fauré's *Pavane* and then Debussy's *Clair de lune* as his opening sequence, Mayer's programme does settle early on into a snug and somewhat somnolent mood.

There are more wakeful signs in parts of Jean Françaix's *L'horloge de flore*, a work of innocent charm that seeks to draw parallels between flowers and certain times of the day, the catchy "Nyctanthe du Malabar" ("Night-flowering jasmine") emitting perhaps the most pungent aroma of the lot. Then it is back once more to pastoral reflection in *Eté* by the present-day Swiss composer and oboist Gotthard Odermatt, a work that has points of contact with Richard Strauss and, as Albrecht's inclusion of *Pavane pour une infante défunte* illustrates, with Ravel as well. Fauré's *Sicilienne*, Satie's *Gymnopédie* No 1 and Reynaldo Hahn's "A Chloris" all reinforce the romantic Parisian idyll that Albrecht aims to capture, with Vincent d'Indy's *Fantaisie sur des thèmes populaires français* adding more bucolic earthiness. So a recital in which to admire Mayer's glorious playing, if not one that perhaps explores his full range. **Geoffrey Norris**

Chamber

Dane Gade's engaging trios • American brass from the RAM • Argerich in Lugano, 2010

Bacewicz

Piano Quintets^a – No 1; No 2.

Piano Sonata No 2

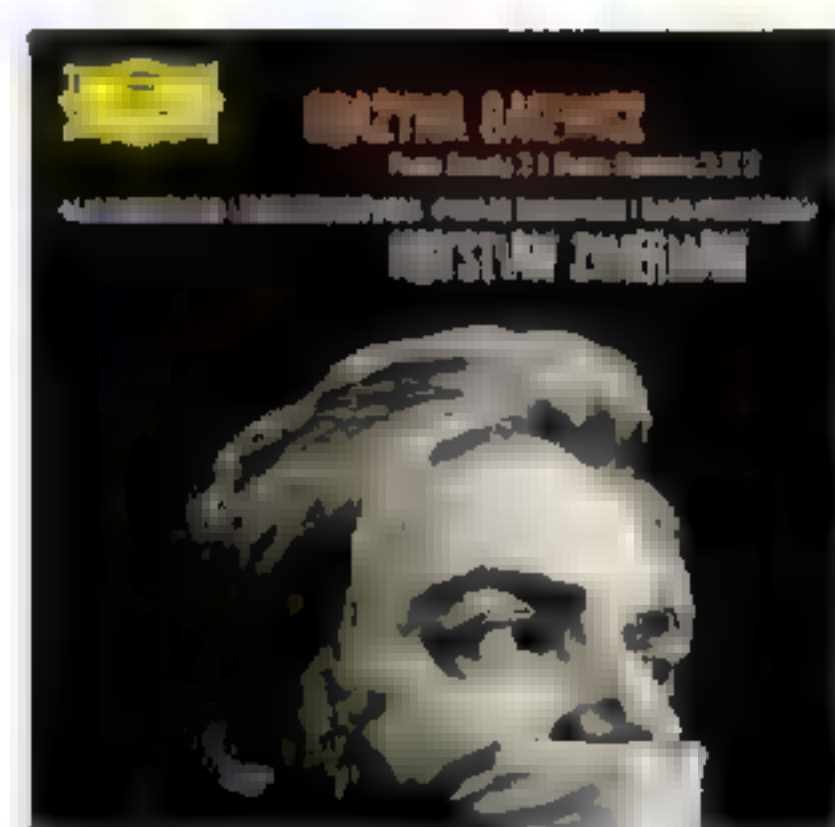
Krystian Zimerman *pf*

^aKaja Danczowska, Agata Szymczewska *vns*

^aRyszard Groblewski *va* ^aRafał Kwiatkowski *vc*

DG Ⓢ 477 8332GH (65' • DDD)

The challenging yet beguiling music of Grażyna Bacewicz



"A lot happens in my music," Bacewicz is quoted as saying. "It's aggressive and at the same time lyrical."

That, according to the booklet writer, "says all that needs to be said about her music".

A moot point. I came to this as a Bacewicz virgin, not knowing what to expect other than what one would anticipate from the composer's dates (1909–69) and nationality (Polish). Sure enough, her music is dissonant, involves complex tone colours, occasionally aleatory features and fearsome technical challenges. Yet all three works here fall back on Classical models, and while there are some gritty passages, I found myself drawn into the sound world with its nods to Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Bartók, Szymanowski and even Ravel.

All three works use the full sonority and dynamic range of the instruments, from the piano's crunching bass clusters in the four-movement Piano Quintet No 1 (1952) and Second Piano Sonata (1953), to the plaintive fragmented string motifs of the *Larghetto* from the Second Piano Quintet (1965). The outer movements of the Sonata make huge demands on Zimerman. He has had the work in his repertoire since the early 1970s (he recorded it in 1977 – Olympia, 12/93) and makes a convincing case for it. Though Bacewicz is unlikely to become a composer of mass popular appeal, this is a fine tribute, vividly recorded.

Jeremy Nicholas

Brahms • Mozart

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

Mozart Clarinet Quintet, K581

Oslo Philharmonic Chamber Group (Leif Arne Pedersen *cl* Elise Båtnes, Pauls Ezergailis *vns* Ida Bryhn *va* Bjørn Solum *vc*)

LAWO Classics Ⓢ LWC1015 (69' • DDD)

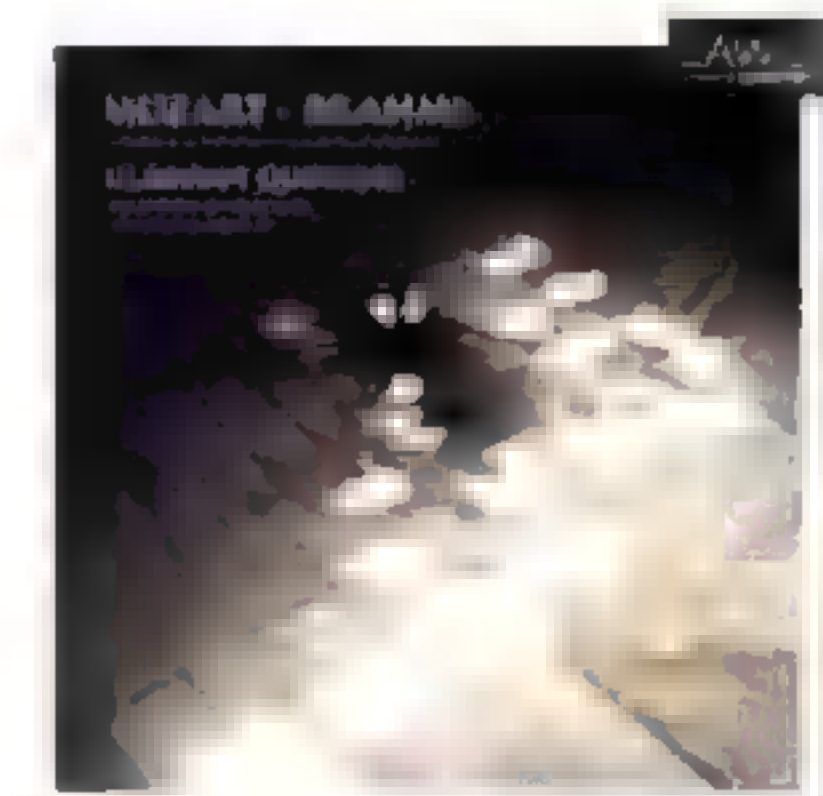
Brahms – selected comparison:

Meyer, *Alban Berg Qt* (7/99) (EMI) 556759-2

Mozart – selected comparison:

Meyer, *Vienna Stg Sextet* (6/89^R) (EMI) 567648-2

Clarity and alertness combine in a classic clarinet quintet pairing



This is music for friends, and these Oslo musicians clearly enjoy playing together; the string quartet members seem especially well matched. In both works

Leif Arne Pedersen chooses largely to eschew the vibrato of older recordings (and, apparently, of Brahms's clarinetist, Richard Mühlfeld), allowing a gain in clarity that the string players don't always take advantage of by drawing out the sap of the inner parts. Their speeds are just sufficiently brisk to prevent the Mozart from drifting into an Ovaltine haze as (is this wholly unfair?) clarinet quintets are wont to do.

Pedersen is mellifluous to a fault, however, and he seems to draw the first phrase of the second movement with exquisite calligraphy rather than living within it. An intimate yet ambient acoustic elides the cello presence and draws a further veil against the close listening ear. The Norwegians play with nigh-perfect intonation, at least until the climax of the slow movement of the Brahms, but then so do Sabine Meyer and the old gold of the Wiener Streichsextett (in the Mozart) and also the Alban Berg Quartet (the Brahms). They weigh each phrase, and in leaning into the Minuet of the Mozart find a gentle melancholy that eludes the perky Norwegian account. The Brahms is again neatly turned but at points of transition the Norwegians tend to flick a switch where Meyer and friends open a window.

Peter Quantrill

Brahms

'Viola II'

Clarinet Quintet, Op 115 (arr viola)^a. String Quintet No 2, Op 111^b. Zwei Lieder, Op 91^c

Maxim Rysanov *va* with ^aAlice Coote *mez*

^{ab}Alexander Sitkovetsky, ^aMariana Osipova,

^bBoris Brovtsyn *vns* ^{ab}Julia Deyneka *va* ^{ab}Kristine

Blaumane *vc* ^cAshley Wass *pf*

Onyx Ⓢ ONYX4054 (81' • DDD • T/T)

Mühlfeld's clarinet swaps places with Rysanov's viola in late Brahms gems



Maxim Rysanov's latest Brahms disc, "Viola II", is a follow-up to "Viola" (1/09). That collection featured the sonatas and trios playable on the viola, while this one

mainly consists of large-scale chamber works from the composer's Indian summer. The Clarinet Quintet may have been inspired by the artistry of a specific musician – Richard Mühlfeld of the Meiningen Orchestra – but Brahms sanctioned the alternative of playing the solo part on the viola (as he would later with his clarinet sonatas). Thus the soloist is a soloist no longer, rather a voice among five similar voices. Yes, it alters the sound and feel of the work but by no means for the worse: the viola becomes truly "first among equals", even in places making the Quintet sound *more* autumnal (the adjective that's usually applied to the work). In the grand G major String Quintet, too, it's striking to note that the first viola is the leading voice almost as often as the first violin (and, indeed, the cello at the work's thrilling opening).

Although the disc is under Rysanov's name, it's 81 minutes of true chamber music-making. It goes without saying that Rysanov is musician enough to know when to take the lead and when to veil his tone to become a supporting voice; his partners match him in technical and interpretative subtlety. The performance of the Clarinet Quintet especially is certainly one to return to for such scintillating playing. The two main works are separated by a pair of songs in which the mezzo of Alice Coote forms a perfect foil to Rysanov's *obbligato* viola.

David Threasher

Debussy • Franck • Ravel

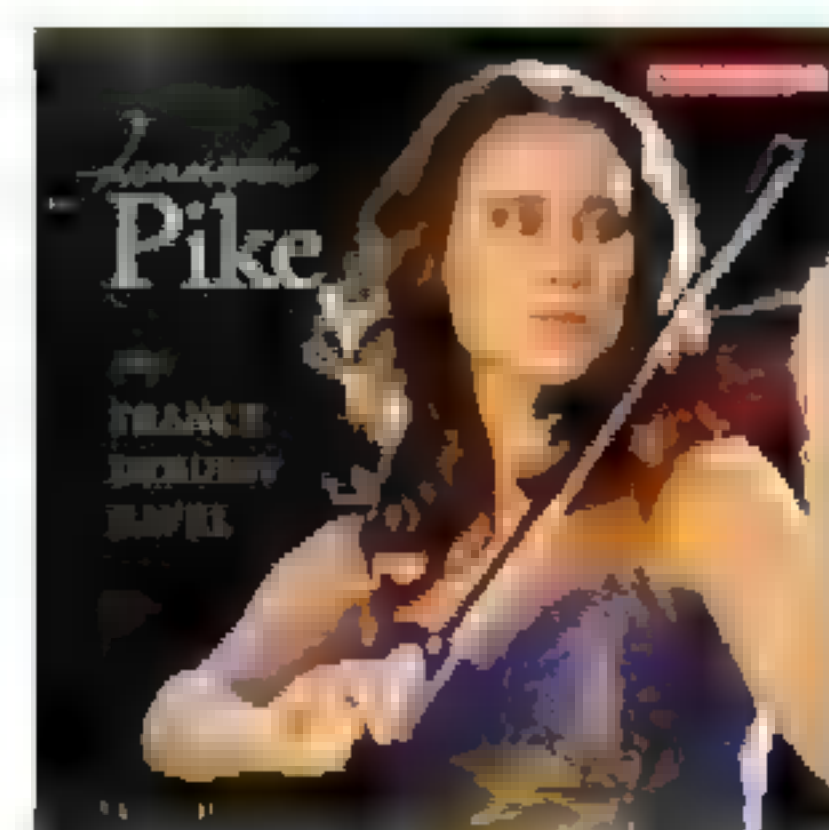
Debussy Violin Sonata Franck Violin Sonata

Ravel Violin Sonata

Jennifer Pike *vn* Martin Roscoe *pf*

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10667 (66' • DDD)

Jennifer Pike keeps the emotions in check in a fine French recital



Though it's standard repertoire, this is a recital that's full of interest. Jennifer Pike and Martin Roscoe's account of the Debussy is particularly fine; in a

work where character and style are so important, they never disappoint – the brilliant passages dispatched with gusto, the grotesque moments given their due and the slinky, sensual episodes suitably alluring.

The first movement of the Ravel gives a clear, balanced impression, with no unmarked changes of tempo; Pike's pure tone contributes perfectly to the bright, spare textures. Compared with the more volatile, temperamental account of Frank Braley and Renaud Capuçon (Virgin, 4/02), it seems cool and objective, qualities I'm sure the composer would have admired. On the other hand, Capuçon and Braley, at a faster tempo, give a more unbuttoned performance of the "Blues" movement, where by comparison Pike and Roscoe seem slightly stiff. But their finale is excellent: Roscoe bringing the different motifs together into a convincing sequence, animated by Pike's precise *moto perpetuo*.

There's similar ability to weld disparate material into a strong discourse in the *Recitativo-Fantasia* movement in the Franck – its closing pages are captivantly poetic. In the preceding *Allegro*, Roscoe's powerful playing of the agitated piano part threatens at times to overwhelm the violin and I wish, when the second theme goes quiet, they didn't also slacken the tempo (track 8, 1'41"). But overall, I'm most impressed that Pike isn't tempted constantly to emote, so that when the feeling does become more intense, it really tells. **Duncan Druce**

Gade

Piano Trio, Op 42. Piano Trio Movement (1839). Novelettes, Op 29 (incl discarded finale). Scherzo³ Trio Parnassus (Yamei Yu *vn* Michael Gross *vc* Chia Chou *pf*) with ^aThomas Selditz *va* MDG © MDG303 1665-2 (64' • DDD)

A Danish composer with his own voice by way of Mendelssohn and Schumann



Gade's F major Trio is far more than a worthy exercise by a provincial master. Apart from the fluency and sure-footedness to be expected of the pride of Danish 19th-century composers, there is warmth and charm here, alongside *joie de vivre* in the finale. "Mendelssohnacidic Schumannoxide", perhaps, as a German contemporary dubbed Gade's style, but it has a distinct taste and, when subtly blended as here, it's one I'm pleased to have acquired. Of course, all these qualities are so clearly evident only thanks to the uncommonly sympathetic playing of Trio Parnassus, who bring pretty much the ideal blend of affection and discretion to this repertoire.

Not even they, however, can make the single movement of early B flat Trio justify its 12 and a half minutes. The third of the five *Novelettes* rather startles with its near-plagiaristic fusion of

the finale of Schumann's Piano Quintet with the slow movement of Schubert's "Great" C major Symphony. But this cycle of five pieces actually hangs together rather well, and it is no surprise to learn from MDG's informative booklet that it sold well in the composer's lifetime. With its well-balanced recording and warm acoustic, this is a disc that would grace the shelves of any specialist collector of chamber and/or Nordic music. **David Fanning**

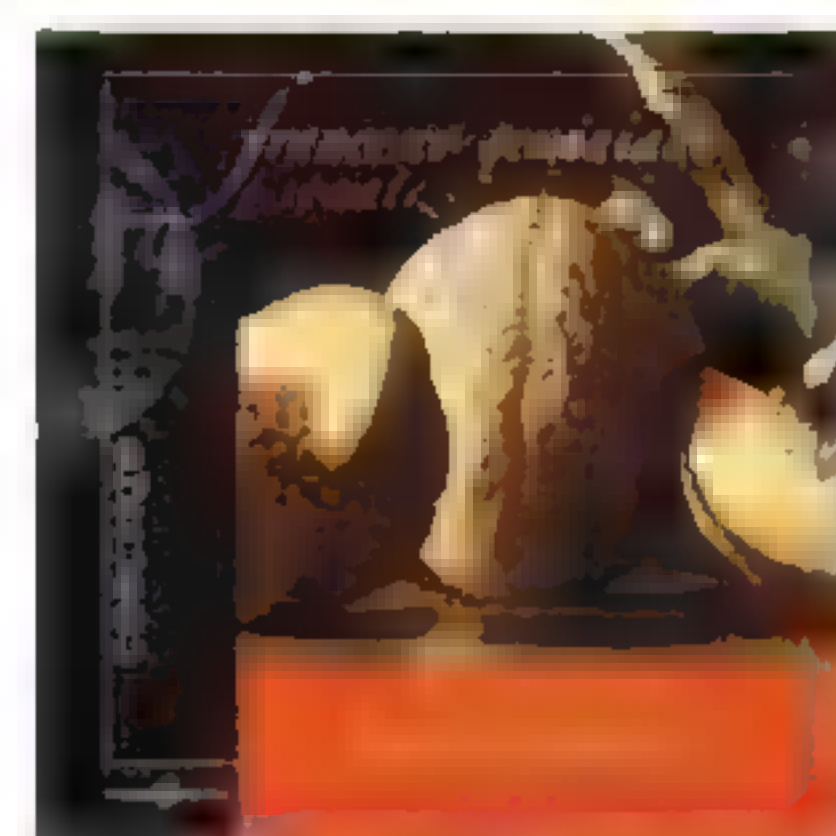
Geminiani

Six Sonatas, Op 5

Enrico Bronzi *vc* Michele Barchi *hpd*

Concerto Classics © CD2061 (55' • DDD)

The weird, wayward and whimsical world of 'The Madman' Geminiani



Known as "Il Furibondo" ("The Madman") on account of his energetic style of playing and conducting, Geminiani had a good start in life.

Born in provincial Lucca, he later studied composition with Alessandro Scarlatti and violin with Corelli. It was this last experience which opened the doors of the English nobility. Sir John Hawkins, one of the most important English observers of the contemporary scene, wrote that "in a very short time, Geminiani displayed such talent in his exquisite performances that all who claimed to understand and love music were urged to hear him". His success in England was such that he stayed there performing, teaching and composing for most of the rest of his career.

The style of the Op 5 Sonatas is very much performers' music – virtuoso and whimsical, full of unusual turns and unexpected moments. It is delivered with enormous verve and understanding by Enrico Bronzi and Michele Barchi, whose sense of commitment and mutual understanding is total. To the bare bones of the written form they bring an appropriate degree of spontaneous improvisation and creative power. The result is the most sensitive and convincing account of these intriguing pieces which, while often quite conventional in their use of familiar Baroque turns of phrase and procedures, can also be strangely wayward. **Iain Fenlon**

Górecki

String Quartets – No 1, 'Already it is dusk', Op 62; No 2, 'Quasi una fantasia', Op 64; No 3, '...songs are sung', Op 67

Royal Quartet (Izabella Szalaj-Zimak, Elwira Przybyłowska *vns* Marek Czech *va* Michał Pepol *vc*) Hyperion © ② CDA67812 (107' • DDD)

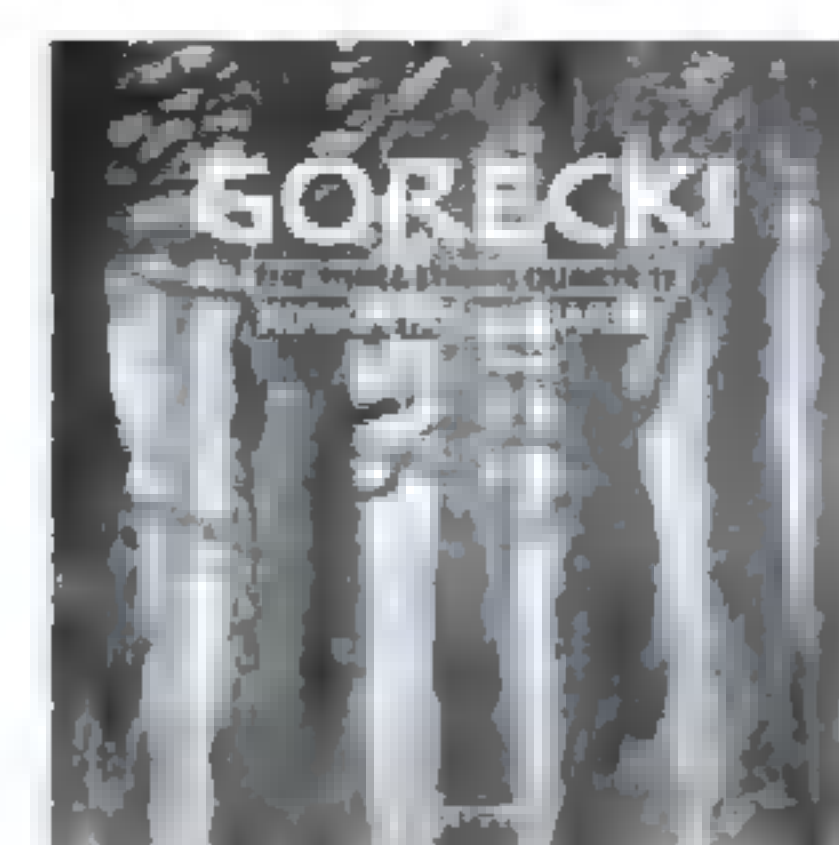
Qts Nos 1 & 2 – selected comparison:

Kronos Qt (4/93) (NONE) 7559 79319-2

Qt No 3 – selected comparison:

Kronos Qt (6/07) (NONE) 7559 79993-2

The string quartets of a Polish master receive potent new performances



String quartets occupied Henryk Górecki intensively in his later years. Inspired by lines from a Renaissance motet, *Already it is dusk* (1988) is a compact

single movement whose ideas – with folk and sacred overtones – alternate equivocally before conflicting in a fraught central section and moving apart in the resigned conclusion. With a variety of allusions to Beethoven, *Quasi una fantasia* (1991) unfolds over four movements – the funereal tread of its *Largo* making way for an often aggressive *Deciso* then an eloquent *Arioso*, before the *Allegro* attempts a synthesis fulfilled only by a fatalistic return to the beginning. Largely completed in 1995, *...songs are sung* – its title drawn from a poem by Velimir Khlebnikov – was only released for performance a decade later. Here the musical evolution is sustained over 55 minutes, with only a brief *Allegro* to offset the introspection of movements either side, themselves framed by a searching threnody and a finale that does not so much resolve accumulated tensions as dissolve them into nothingness.

All three works were composed for the Kronos Quartet, whose recordings still serve them admirably. Yet the visceral quality of the Royal Quartet's renditions points up emotional contrasts in the first two quartets rather more readily, while their emotional commitment makes the finale of the Third Quartet feel more an intended apotheosis than an extended postlude. Those possessing the earlier discs need to not rush to change. But, with its ideal quartet sound and informative booklet-notes, this would be the preferred choice. **Richard Whitehouse**

Herrmann

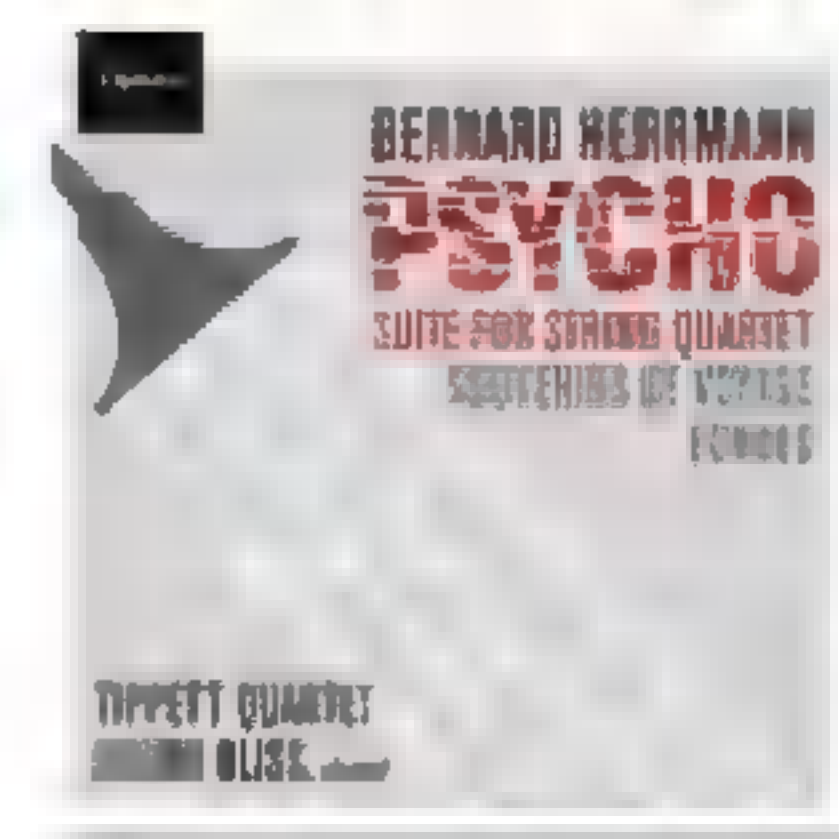
Echoes. Psycho Suite. Souvenirs de voyage^a

^aJulian Bliss *d*

Tippett Quartet (John Mills, Jeremy Isaac *vns* Julia O'Riordan *va* Bozidar Vukotic *vc*)

Signum © SIGCD234 (57' • DDD)

There's more to Bernard Herrmann than Psycho, thrillingly as it's played here...



Many commercial composers have felt obliged to become stylistic chameleons but not Bernard Herrmann. While he may have been unhappy with his lot in Hollywood, his film work has a rare idiomatic consistency which extends to his music for the recital room. Nothing comes across as particularly American, perhaps because his musical heroes included the likes of Vaughan Williams and Sir John Barbirolli. As keen to escape the movie pigeonhole as his colleague André Previn, he returned to concert music



Chamber reviews

after falling out with Alfred Hitchcock over the score for *Torn Curtain*.

Herrmann probably wouldn't have relished the primacy given to the *Psycho Suite* in the present collection although it is most successfully arranged (by Richard Birchall) and thrillingly, chillingly delivered by a double-tracked Tippett Quartet. It is difficult to think of a more influential piece of illustrative music, nor one so blatantly ripped off by its many imitators. *Souvenirs de voyage*, featuring the suitably restrained clarinet of Julian Bliss, is effective too in its more pallid fashion. It is *Echoes*, the haunting and melancholy string quartet written when Herrmann's second marriage had unravelled, that proves most memorable, giving new life to turns of phrase and musical strategies familiar from the silver screen. The piece has been recorded before, as has *Souvenirs de voyage* – they were reunited for reissue on Unicorn (5/95) – but it is impossible to imagine more expert renditions than these. The players are always very tangibly present in a resonant venue which may or may not have produced some narrowing of dynamic range (the *Psycho Suite* sounds drier) and there are excellent notes by film historian Neil Sinyard. Recommended. **David Gutman**

Mendelssohn

Octet, Op 20 (original 1825 version)

Eroica Quartet (Peter Hanson, Julia Hanson *vns* Vicci Wardman *va* David Watkin *vc*) with **Ken Aiso, Marcus Barsham-Stevens vns** **Oliver Wilson va Robin Michael vc**

Resonus Classics © ➔ RES10101 (36' • DDD)

A staple of the repertoire presented as Mendelssohn first imagined it



Here's a recording of Mendelssohn's miraculous teenage Octet with a difference. Well, several differences, actually. The Eroica Quartet

have gone back to the first draft of the work, revealing a fascinating stop along the route to the much-loved masterpiece we all know so well. The first two movements underwent the most thoroughgoing revision for the 1832 version (the one that's usually performed) and it brings one up short on first hearing the young composer's diversions in places such as the end of the opening movement's exposition or much of its development. The Walpurgis-Scherzo and finale largely escaped the blue pencil except for the odd spit here or polish there (and 37 bars lost in the final movement).

Would the Octet have seemed such a miracle had it been published and become famous in this draft version? I don't see why not: even in this form the work shows Mendelssohn's preternatural ability to craft a sonata argument or a touching slow movement on the grand scale and, doing

one's best to hear this version with an "innocent ear", there seems to be little or no redundancy or prolixity. The revision thus served mainly to tauten the structure, even if it meant losing some moments of striking aural imagination. The Eroicas and friends also adopt 19th-century approaches to style, in terms of bowing, *portamento* and vibrato. The result is a performance as exhilarating musically as it is absorbing musicologically.

One to rush out and buy then? There lies another difference. Resonus Classics is a new label whose recordings will only be issued as downloads. I listened to an MP3 at 320kbps, which sounded as good as anything else on my iPod and left little to be desired through stereo speakers; the recording is also available in a range of sample-rates up to 24-bit studio master. Prices range from around a fiver for the MP3, £6 for CD-quality FLAC and £12 for the studio master; you can also buy tracks individually. The download package includes a CD-size booklet pdf with excellent notes on the music and the performance. If you enjoy this Octet as much as I did, you can even click "like" on Facebook. **David Thresher**

Pohjonen/Kosminen

Uniko

Kimmo Pohjonen acco/voc Samuli Kosminen elec **Kronos Quartet** (David Harrington, John Sherba *vns* Hank Dutt *va* Jeffrey Zeigler *vc*)

Ondine © ODE1185-2 (52' • DDD)

Avant-garde folk, electronics and the Kronos Quartet come together



only seven made it into the 2007 recording issued now on disc and download. The style is truly crossover, where slow Finnish cantilenas, often counterpointed by fast-moving figurations from Pohjonen's "electrified" (*sic*) accordion and Kosminen's battery of electronic aids, alternate with lively Turkish-sounding dance-like pieces, in a context with nods towards modern jazz and the New Simplicity.

The expressive landscape is harder to pin down. The booklet doesn't help explore the seven illustrative titles and there's similar lack of guidance on websites from Pohjonen and the Kronos Quartet. Pohjonen did provide some clues in an online interview for allaboutjazz.com, for example that "Uniko" means poppy, and the title of the first movement, "Utu", means flux. Otherwise, "Särmä" is a geometric term for edge, "Kalma" is either Islamic prayer reciting (likely) or benzodiazepines (unlikely), "Kamala" a lotus flower of the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, "Emo" possibly soft-core punk music and "Avara" the Finnish for "spacious".

Depiction of a Creation myth or hymn to the poppy? Live performances come with visual and multimedia accompaniment (see YouTube) and the whole has the feel of a soundtrack to it. In audio only, something is lacking. Whatever the expressive aim, I found the music – expertly delivered and carefully constructed – dismally empty and uninvolved. But then I am not part of Pohjonen's fan base or target audience. You have been warned!

Guy Rickards

Saint-Saëns

String Quartets – No 1, Op 112; No 2, Op 153

Fine Arts Quartet (Ralph Evans, Efim Boico *vns* Nicolò Eugelmi *va* Wolfgang Laufer *vc*)

Naxos © 8 572454 (63' • DDD)

Music to change minds: two quartets that show Saint-Saëns's hidden depths



The Fine Arts Quartet continue their admirable series (Beethoven, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Bruckner, Franck and Fauré) with Saint-Saëns's two string

quartets. And here they make a persuasive case for music that is not only "brilliantly crafted" but "serious and intellectual" (their leader Ralph Evans). Certainly the First Quartet in E minor in particular is a reminder of music beyond the elegant facility with which Saint-Saëns is habitually credited. He may have "produced music as an apple tree produces apples" (his own words) but later in his life the string quartet provided him with a special challenge.

There is urgency as well as charm, and an expressive range that makes Fauré's lifelong admiration understandable. The first-movement development is intricate and dramatic, and the second movement's syncopation is again urgent rather than lightweight. There is major-key relief in the Second Quartet, composed in the spirit of Mozart and with the first movement's celebration of youth clouded by an awareness of old age in the *Molto adagio – Andantino* (with his typically dry humour, Saint-Saëns dismissed it as "deadly dull"). But there is nothing dull about the Fine Arts' playing. Excellently balanced and recorded, they bring fervour and commitment to music which will cause many listeners to reconsider Saint-Saëns's musical standing.

Bryce Morrison

Schubert - Berg

Berg String Quartet, Op 3

Schubert String Quartet No 15, D887

Kuss Quartet (Jana Kuss, Oliver Wille *vns*

William Coleman *va* Mikayel Haknazaryan *vc*)

Onyx © ONYX4066 (74' • DDD)

Schubert – selected comparison:

Belcea Qt (12/09) (EMI) 967025-2

Schubert's last quartet in ■ performance of two halves – and ■ clever coupling



For Professor Stephen E Hefling, “the scope and originality – epic strangeness, one might even say – of the G major Quartet are without precedent”.

And Schubert's precipitate shifts of tonality at the beginning, of G minor wresting G major and D minor wresting D major, suggest epic discomfort too. The Kuss Quartet hit hard; in each instance the change of key, from *piano* to *fortissimo* in two bars, is hurled across with a violence that's a portent of things to come. This first movement of agitated tremolos and major/minor juxtapositions is tightly coalesced in a performance of ferocity and concentration. And the aggressive outbursts in the slow movement are played to reflect not simply passing anger but menacing rage. The Kuss hold back nothing in their depiction of spine-chilling power in these two movements. They then change tack and loosen the reins – in a *Scherzo* that's rather deliberate for *Allegro vivace* and a finale too relaxed for *Allegro assai*.

Not the case with the Belcea Quartet. If their interpretation of the first two movements isn't quite as harrowing as that of the Kuss, their high-tensile *Scherzo* and a finale stretched to breaking-point are pertinent. Pertinent too is the Kuss's choice of Berg's Quartet as a coupling because, despite its complexity, both movements are in classical sonata form; and the work is a love-song expressed through a range of musical patterns, playing techniques and *rubatos* to which these formidable musicians are fully attuned. **Nalen Anthoni**

Shostakovich · Weinberg

Shostakovich Piano Quintet, Op 57

Weinberg Piano Quintet, Op 18

Matthias Kirschnereit *pf* **Szymanowski Quartet** (Andrej Bielov, Grzegorz Kotów *vns* Vladimir Mykyrka *va* Marcin Sieniawski *vc*)

Hänssler Classic © CD93 260 (76 • DDD)

Weinberg – selected comparisons:

ARC Ens (RCA) 82876 87769-2

Weinberg, Borodin Qt (MELO) MELCD100 0979

A pair of Soviet piano quintets in well-characterised performances



In many ways Weinberg's Piano Quintet is the natural coupling for Shostakovich's masterpiece, which it post-dates by five years.

Not in any way overshadowed by the comparison, it is equally memorable and, if anything, bolder still in its emotional range and use of the instruments. Only very

occasionally do its ideas sound less than freshly minted (as in the finale, which owes a debt to Shostakovich's *Scherzo* but soon repays it by developing its own mixture of rollicking momentum and defiant resistance). The 13-minute slow movement is arguably too long for its substance. But then so too is Shostakovich's fugal second movement. Each simply relies on the performers to grab the listener and not let go.

Matthias Kirschnereit and the Szymanowski Quartet pay Weinberg the compliment of scrupulous preparation (the writing is technically a good deal harder than Shostakovich's) and sympathetically inflected phrasing. If there were no competition, they could be welcomed almost without reservation. As it is we have the composer's own version with the Borodins, which may not be flawless but which is wonderfully free and exciting; and we have a fine account from the Toronto-based ARC Ensemble as part of an invaluable all-Weinberg programme.

In comparison with both of these the new version's first movement is rather too droopy. If the string playing were richer in tone and the acoustic a fraction warmer, that might not matter, but as there is otherwise comparatively little to choose between the performances, these minor drawbacks stand out. They detract significantly from the Shostakovich too, the more so given the greater transparency of the textures. Otherwise there is little to fault in the playing; indeed, the characterisation is frequently spot-on. **David Fanning**

'American Icons'

Barber Adagio (arr Rickard) **Bernstein** Prelude, Fugue and Riffs^a **Copland** Fanfare for the Common Man **Gershwin** Porgy and Bess – A Symphonic Picture. Rhapsody in Blue^b (both arr Rickard)

^b**Liu Ji** *pf* ^a**Kimón Parry** *d*

Academy Symphonic Brass / **James Watson**

Royal Academy of Music © RAM042 (51 • DDD)

Classics of American music, winningly arranged for brass instruments



This American anthology is well named. The Copland *Fanfare* is iconic for jubilation, Barber's Adagio for tragedy. The ensemble is large – six trumpets, four horns, two trombones, bass trombone, tenor tuba, two bass tubas with various doublings – and as Academy Symphonic Brass it has already recorded two CDs. What's new here is that Tony Rickard has made arrangements of the Gershwin and Barber works, and very effective they are too. The “Symphonic Picture” from *Porgy and Bess*, as selected by Robert Russell Bennett, is a mish-mash but many of the tunes are all there. It's amazing that such a large

group is so athletic and the solos are convincing – “Summertime” on the trombone!

In *Rhapsody in Blue* – with its opening glissando astonishingly delivered by a trumpet – pianist Liu Ji finds comedy and tenderness and he's less brittle than Donohoe under Rattle (EMI, 12/87). Both the careful scoring and this well-balanced recording make sure that the piano is not overwhelmed, as often happens.

The Barber Adagio has become incredibly popular both for strings and for voices as *Agnus Dei*. This spacious arrangement works well, although negotiating the exceptionally long melodic phrases with brass players has obviously dictated a faster tempo than usual. There are plenty of recordings of Bernstein's once-neglected *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* and, of course, of the Copland *Fanfare*, which evokes its unique atmosphere again here. Altogether a fine tribute to brass culture at the Academy, and to conductor James Watson, who died unexpectedly at the age of 59, shortly after this disc was released. **Peter Dickinson**

'Dance'

Adams John's Book of Alleged Dances – Pavane: She's So Fine **Bates** Peculiar Terms of Physical Intimacy **J Cutler** Folk Music (Daithi's Dumka) **Dennehy** STAMP (to avoid erotic thoughts) **Tan Dun** Eight Colors – Black Dance **Finnissy** Six Sexy Minuets Three Trios – Minuet **Fitkin** Informal Dance **Jegede** Dancing in the Spirit **Kats-Chernin** Naïve Waltz **Lord** Zarabanda solitaria **Nyman** Never Forever – Tango **Poppy** Definitely Disco **G Prokofiev** Bogle Move **Volans** White Man Sleeps – First Dance

Smith Quartet (Ian Humphries, Darragh Morgan *vns* Nic Pendlebury *va* Deirdre Cooper *vc*)

Signum © SIGCD236 (59 • DDD)

Take the floor with this intriguing collection of modern dances



It would be bad form in this day and age to wonder what kind of dancing might go on to the sound of this intriguing pot-pourri, so I shall merely

comment on what is a diverse collection of engaging pieces in the spirit of lively engagement in which it was intended. Every one of the 14 works here is played with panache and technical brilliance by the Smith Quartet.

The mixture of styles can be disconcerting, but that, I rather think, is part of the fun. Of familiar dances we have a number of transmutations, such as the Tango by Michael Nyman, the Minuet by Michael Finnissy and, probably less familiarly, the *Zarabanda solitaria* by Jon Lord. Other contributions take the idea of a dance and drag it into rather different territory: such are Joe Cutler's *Folk Music (Daithi's Dumka)* and Gabriel Prokofiev's *Bogle Move*, inspired by Jamaican ragga. Prokofiev's work is one



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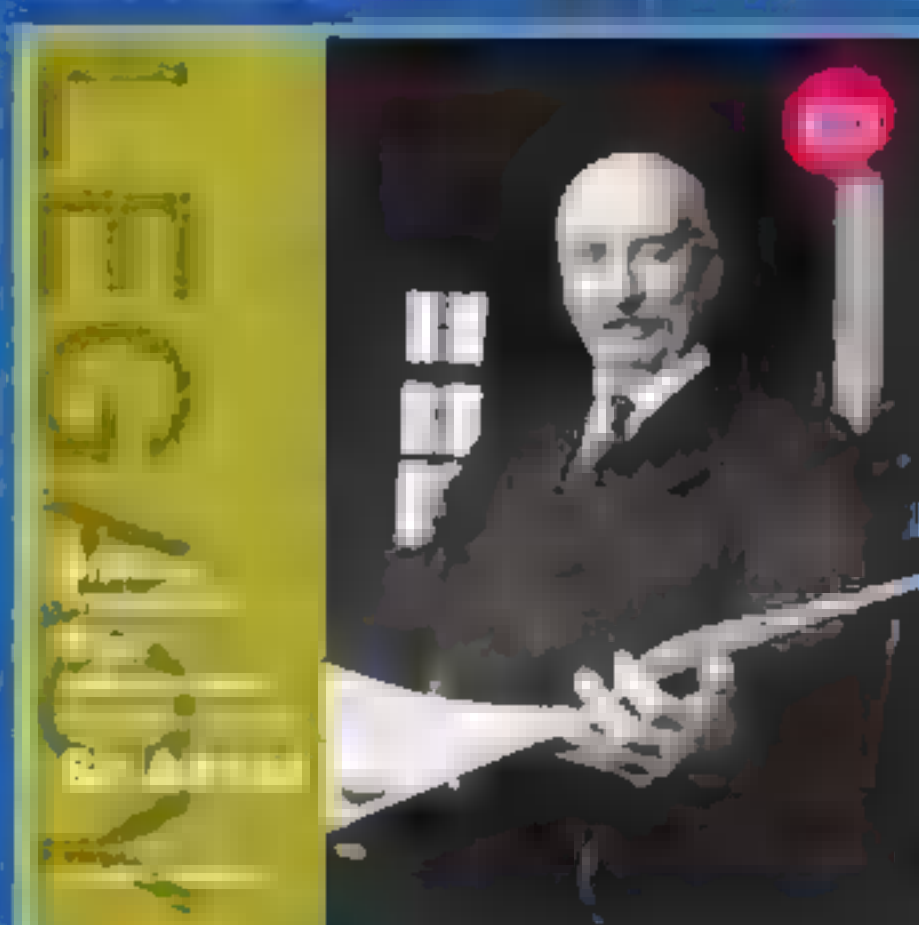
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Sir Adrian Boult

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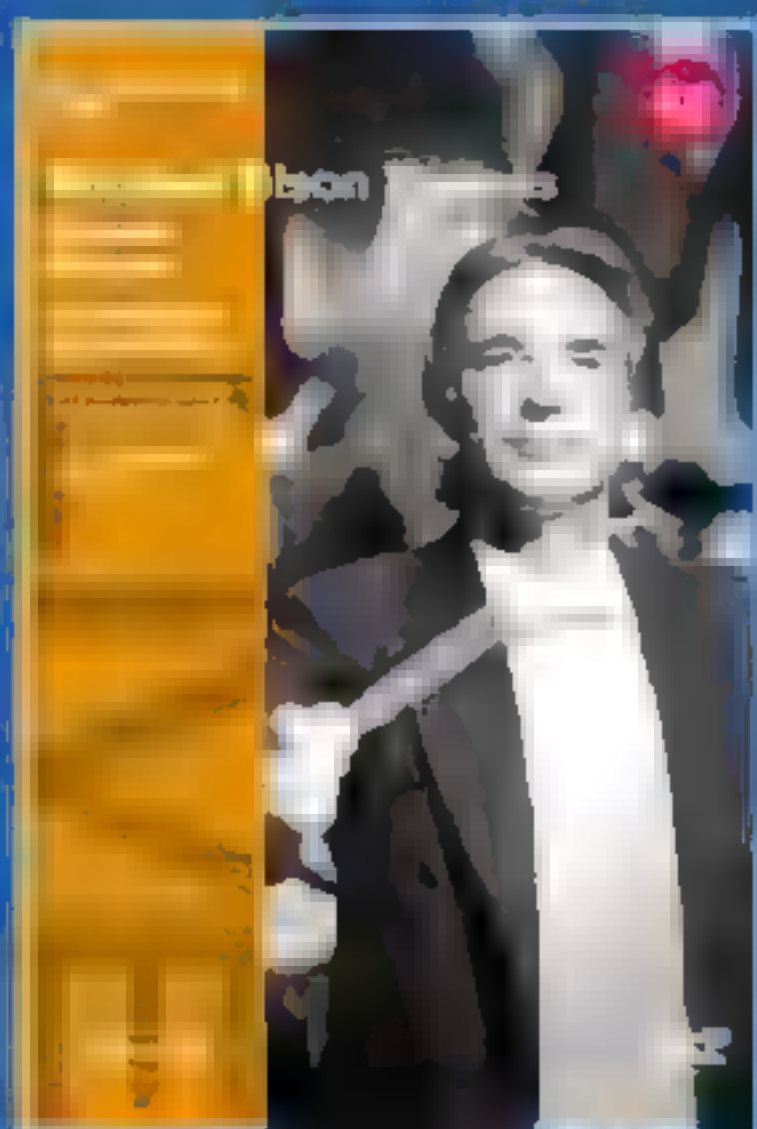
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of those that stand out here, as is also Donnacha Dennehy's *STAMP* (to avoid erotic thoughts), a highly ingenious recasting of the medieval estampie, and the final track, Django Bates's *Peculiar Terms of Physical Intimacy*, a Flann O'Brien-inspired unison jig. Hesitate no longer; take the floor and join in the dance, with whichever steps seem appropriate.

Ivan Moody

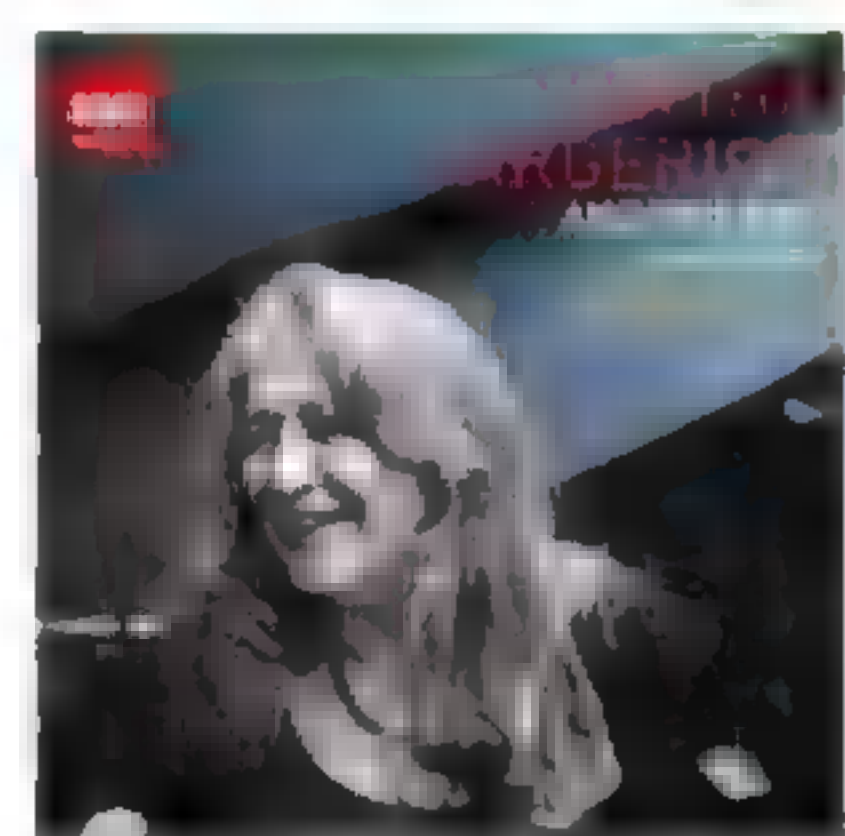
'Live from Lugano 2010'



Bartók Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, Sz110^a **Brahms** Variations on a Theme by Schumann, Op 23^b **Chopin** Rondo, Op 73^c. Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11^d **Gershwin** **Grainger** Fantasy on Porgy and Bess^e **Granados** Piano Quintet, Op 49^f **Korngold** Piano Quintet, Op 15^g **Liszt** Les préludes, S97^h **Schnittke** Piano Quintet, Op 108ⁱ **Schumann** Violin Sonata No 1, Op 105^j. Adagio and Allegro, Op 70^k **Stravinsky** The Firebird – Suite (arr Griguoli)^l ^{adhjk} **Martha Argerich** *pf* with ^bNicholas Angelich, ^cSergei Edelmann, ^dCarlo Maria Griguoli, ^eAlexander Gurning, ^fStephen Kovacevich, ^gLily Maisky, ^hAlexander Mogilevsky, ⁱGabriela Montero, ^jDaniel Rivera, ^kAlessandro Stella, ^lGiorgia Tomassi, ^mLilya Zilberstein *pfs* ⁿRenaud Capucpn, ^oLucia Hall, ^pGeza Hosszu-Legocky, ^qAlissa Margulis, ^rDora Schwarzberg *vms* ^sLida Chen, ^tNora Romanoff-Schwarzberg *va* ^uJorge Bosso, ^vGautier Capucpn, ^wMark Drobinsky, ^xNatalia Margulis *vc* ^yDanilo Grassi, ^zLouis Sauvêtre *perc* ^{aa}Svizzera Italiana Orchestra / Jacek Kaspszyk

EMI © 070836-2 (4h • DDD)

Another beguiling chamber miscellany from Martha Argerich and friends



Tired of the strains and stresses of her former and extraordinary career, Martha Argerich now takes up annual residence in Lugano where, surrounded by her friends and colleagues, she oversees a serious of concerts, happy for the most part to share the limelight. Most prodigiously gifted of all pianists, she inspires others with her presence, and many of these performances are of an opulent and overwhelming glory.

Yet if I was to pick one instance of the electricity and expressive freedom encountered on these three CDs it would have to be Argerich's recreation of Chopin's First Concerto, one of the few concertos she continues to play in public. For her, nothing remains the same and, fired by setting and circumstance, she has rarely sounded more vehement, personal or beguiling. As for the finale, I doubt whether it has ever been played with a more riotous or consuming brilliance in its entire history. Then there is Schnittke's Piano Quintet, where a quartet is joined by Lilya Zilberstein. Together they make every note of this unnerving masterpiece speak with

a ferocious concentration and intensity. The desolating *In tempo di valse* is unforgettable, and so, too, is a finale where Schnittke's chill menace is only partially resolved. Here, innocence unites with an altogether more clouded state of mind.

Zilberstein also features in the elegant virtuoso tracery of Chopin's Op 73 Rondo for two pianos, where her partner is Sergei Edelmann. Yet once again it is Argerich whose incomparable vividness dominates. What rich eloquence she achieves, together with Gautier Capucpn, in Schumann's Adagio and Allegro for cello and piano, how fleet her response to the hallucinatory play of light and shade in the same composer's First Violin Sonata (with Renaud Capucpn). Then there are piano quintets by Granados and Korngold, and further music by Brahms, Stravinsky, Bartók and Gershwin, performed as to the manner born. All in all, these discs are a reminder of a unique, ever-formidable and enchanting artist.

Bryce Morrison

'Romantic Trumpet Sonatas'

Grieg Holberg Suite, Op 40 **Mendelssohn** Cello Sonata No 2, Op 58 **Pilss** Trumpet Sonata **Schumann** Violin Sonata No 1, Op 105

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood *tpi*

Daniel-Ben Pienaar *pf*

Linn © CKD370 (70' • DDD/DSD)

String sonatas from the 19th century transpose successfully to the trumpet



Trumpet virtuosos have that old conundrum to deal with – seemingly unable to discover a core of contemporary repertoire which their public find attractive, looking therefore to the art of transcription. But one rather sits up at the opening Praeludium of Grieg's *Holberg Suite*, flutter-tonguing and all. It certainly invites and receives ready virtuosity but loses its natural charm, and the only two movements that transcribe really effectively are the Gavotte and closing Rigaudon.

Surprisingly perhaps, Schumann's First Violin Sonata is much more successful, with the outer movements full of lyricism and life, and the central *Allegretto* sounding really well on the trumpet. Mendelssohn's Second Cello Sonata too comes off quite engagingly, the *Scherzo*, not unexpectedly, quite delightful, the *Adagio* soaring up spectacularly; in the finale Jonathan Freeman-Attwood readily displays and enjoys the virtuosity. Karl Pilss wrote his sonata in 1935 and is determinedly communicative, with an unashamedly romantic *Adagio*, *molto cantabile* and a rollicking finale. Throughout, the trumpet-playing of Freeman-Attwood is first class. But what makes this collection doubly enjoyable

is the outstandingly responsive piano contribution from Daniel-Ben Pienaar, who is always excellently balanced with the trumpet.

Ivan March

'White Nights'

'Viola Music from St Petersburg, Vol 1'

Glazunov Elegy, Op 44 **Glinka** Viola Sonata

Rimsky-Korsakov Sadko – Song of the Indian

Guest. The Snow Maiden – Dance of the

Tumblers **Shostakovich** Preludes, Op 34

(arr Strachov) – Nos 10, 14-18 & 24

Stravinsky Elegy. Mavra – Russian Song

Tchaikovsky Valse sentimentale, Op 51 No 6

Tatjana Masurenko *va* Roglit Ishay *pf*

Profil © PH10029 (58' • DDD)

Making a case for the viola in music connected to a great city



That Tatjana Masurenko is an exceptional performer is not in doubt. Born into the family of a Russian jazz musician, she opted early for the viola and

believes that "the day will come when the viola emerges from the shadow of the violin and cello. Audiences will come to realise how close this instrument is to the human voice, and how infinitely rich and wonderful it can be." Teaching since 2003 in Leipzig, she continues to shine brightly both in an ensemble context and as a soloist. Well supported by pianist Roglit Ishay, she seeks to make some kind of statement about a city in which she herself studied, its rich interconnected legacy of composing talent and those magical summer nights when the latitude of 60° north ensures that it never gets really dark.

Students of her instrument will be fascinated to explore the mix of viola originals and arrangements, although less committed listeners may find the selection somewhat bitty. The lengthier offerings come first: a successful Shostakovich group transcribed from the Op 34 Preludes and a classically inclined sonata by Glinka. Subsequent items stray into Classic FM transcription territory – no harm in that – save for a slow and timbrally varied account of the one piece Stravinsky actually composed for the instrument. The Elegy finds the viola playing its traditional role of mourner-in-chief. Only in the arrangement of the "Russian Song" from *Mavra* does the treatment seem momentarily overwrought. The penultimate track, Rimsky-Korsakov's "Dance of the Tumblers", works splendidly whatever its title. Notes are provided but the lack of a properly numbered track-listing is a definite black mark to set against the eloquent music-making, vividly captured in a rather resonant German studio.

David Gutman

Instrumental

Leslie Howard's Liszt, all together • James Rhodes's latest • Three pianist portraits

JS Bach • Bartók • Ysaÿe

'Solo Sonatas'

Bach Solo Violin Sonata No 2, BWV1003

Bartók Sonata for Solo Violin, Sz117

Ysaÿe Sonata for Solo Violin, Op 27 No 4

Georges-Emmanuel Schneider *vm*

Classical Concert Records © CCR62072 (128' • DDD)

Three solo sonatas that can't challenge the competition



Swiss violinist Georges-Emmanuel Schneider has the technique to give a good account of this demanding programme and his performances have other virtues, too.

In the Bach, he's adept at combining a degree of rhythmic flexibility with an inspiring sense of the music's long-term progress. In the finale of the Bartók, the louder, Hungarian passages have an idiomatic swagger (though some of the *ritardandos* are overdone) and in the Ysaÿe first movement he sustains the slow tempo the composer asks for while avoiding any sense of stagnation.

I can't, however, recommend any of these performances as a first choice. Vilde Frang's recent account of the Bartók (EMI, 5/11), for example, avoids the feeling of laboriousness that sometimes afflicts Schneider, as well as introducing a far wider range of colours while, in the third movement, "Melodia", making the unadorned lines much more expressive. In this era of historically informed performance, violinists such as Alina Ibragimova (Hyperion, 11/09) and Christian Tetzlaff (Hänssler, 8/07) have shown in a thrilling way how Bach can be rethought in terms of the modern instrument, in this sonata in particular finding a touching style and tone for the *Andante* (Schneider's flowing tempo in this movement is fine but his manner is too forceful, not drawing enough attention to Bach's beautiful dissonances). And the Ysaÿe, though a thoroughly enjoyable performance, doesn't have the same brilliance and air of fantasy that Philippe Graffin (Hyperion, 7/97^R) or Leonidas Kavakos (BIS) bring to it. **Duncan Druce**

Beethoven

Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op 120.

Six Bagatelles, Op 126

Gary Cooper *fp*

Channel Classics © CCSSA29110 (74' • DDD/DSD)

Musician's integrity let down by a less-than-perfect instrument



Though not the first recording "to place this particular masterpiece firmly in the sound world of the early 1820s", as Gary Cooper believes, it is the first to use an instrument made during Beethoven's lifetime. Edmund Battersby recorded the work in 2005 on a copy of an 1825 Graf (coupling it with a performance on a modern Steinway, a two-disc release from Naxos). Cooper uses a restored 1822 Walter und Sohn fortepiano. Its tonal character is not one to which the ear readily warms, confirming my perhaps simplistic belief that musical instruments were developed in order to improve them.

The fortepiano can shed new light on colour and texture – witness Ronald Brautigam's magnificent BIS survey of the sonatas – but here, with what comes across as a keyboard with uneven regulation, one strains to catch some of the notes. As early as Var 3 the left-hand quavers in the second part appear as a mysterious wash, while in Var 22 (and nowhere else) the Walter creates a buzzing sound akin to blowing a paper and comb. Despite my admiration for this fine musician and his laudable integrity, such concerns distract from one's involvement with and enjoyment of the music.

Cooper completes the disc with the Six Bagatelles written shortly after the Variations. Again, the brighter, more incisive character of Beethoven's own 1817 Broadwood, in the hands of Melvyn Tan (Virgin) proves to be a friendlier companion. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas – No 30, Op 109;

No 31, Op 110; No 32, Op 111

Alexei Lubimov *pf*

Zig-Zag Territories © ZTT110103 (65' • DDD)

Late Beethoven on an 1828 piano but the playing is no match for Peter Serkin



Imagine the highly inflected, pianistically oriented and sectionalised Beethoven-playing one often heard from Soviet artists such as Maria Grinberg,

Maria Yudina, Tatyana Nikolaieva or the younger Gilels or Richter, apply it to an authentic 1828 Alois Graff model instrument, and you've largely got the gist of Alexei Lubimov's interpretations of the last three sonatas. Notice, for example, the hairpin dynamics and tapered phrases in Op 109's first movement and Op 110's *Allegro molto* that seem expressive in and of themselves, yet ultimately dissipate the effect of Beethoven's sudden, characteristic shifts of loud and soft. The same goes for the Op 109 *Prestissimo*'s rounded edges, whereas Peter Serkin's flexibility boasts far more abandon, forward sweep and high-impact bass-lines.

However, Lubimov compensates in the Op 109 variations and Op 110 fugue with fluid tempo relationships and impressive *legato* phrasing. Following a broad, steady and appropriately bleak *Maestoso*, Lubimov decisively launches into Op 111's *Allegro con brio ed appassionato*, fusing clarity and force along the lines of Paul Badura-Skoda's superb late-1970s fortepiano recording, yet frequently telegraphing Beethoven's tempo adjustments. Similarly, Lubimov's adjustments to the basic pulse undermine the Arietta's large-scale cumulative trajectory and emotional extremes, lacking Serkin's exultation and sustained intensity. The intimate, close-up engineering conveys plenty of warmth and tonal variety but, if you can deal with murkier, over-resonant sound, Serkin's late Beethoven (Musical Concepts) remains the period-instrument point of reference, closely seconded by Ronald Brautigam (BIS). **Jed Distler**

Cage

Four⁴

Simon Allen, Chris Burn,

Lee Patterson, Mark Wastell *perc*

Another Timbre © AT34 (74' • DDD)

Cage

One. One². One⁵

Sabine Liebner *pf*

Neos © NEOS11043 (71' • DDD)

Cage

ASLSP

Sabine Liebner *pf*

Neos © NEOS11042 (64' • DDD)

Intrepid improvisers find that Cage's number pieces are what you make them

Tanya Tomkins:
a knowledgeable
and stylish player

Bach WITH HEART

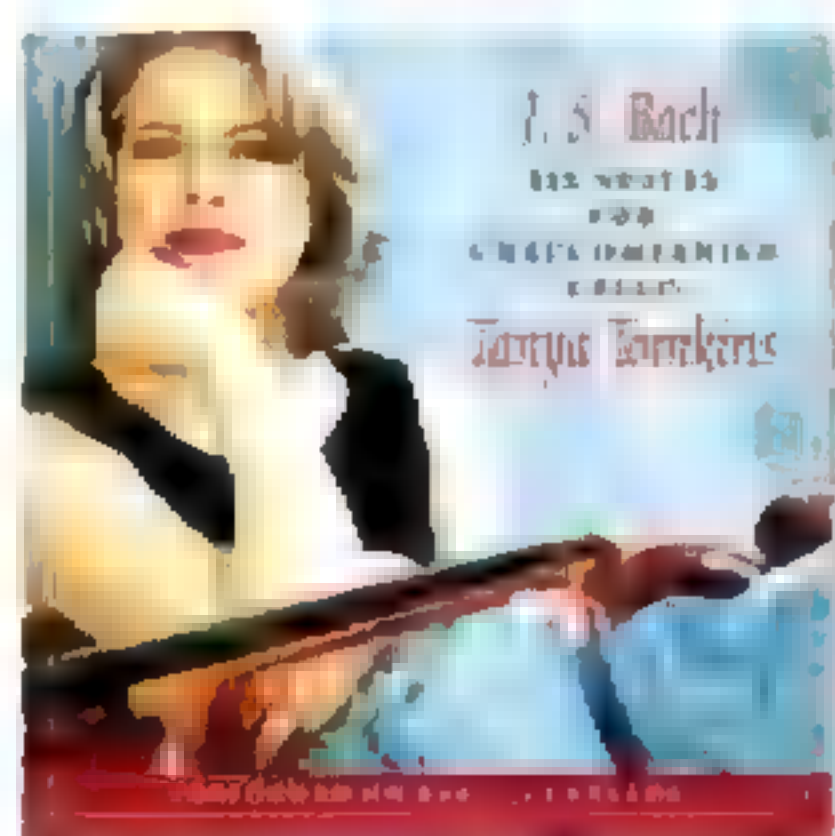
The Suites with two main instruments and plenty of feeling

JS Bach

Six Cello Suites, BWV1007-12

Tanya Tomkins *vc*

Avie (M) ② AV2212 (153' • DDD)



Since the mid-1960s, when Nikolaus Harnoncourt made the first recording of the Bach Suites on a “Baroque cello” (not released until 1978),

only a small number of other early music specialists have stepped forward to offer their perspectives on these works, among them Anner Bylisma (1981), Jaap ter Linden (1997), Susan Sheppard (2000) and Sergei Istomin (2005). The intrepid viola da gamba player Paolo Pandolfo’s adaptation appeared in 2001. The latest period player to take up the challenge is Tanya Tomkins. She has recorded the first five on her 1798 Hill (technically not a “Baroque” cello) and the Sixth on a copy of a five-string instrument after Gofriller by Dominik Zuchowicz in a delightfully intimate acoustical setting.

A knowledgeable and stylish player, Tomkins varies the treatment of chords imaginatively and avoids the slavish ornamentation of every repeat. There are moments of genius in the demanding

Sixth Suite, in the repeats of the second section of the Sarabande, where she artfully deconstructs the chords, and in the Gavotte II, where she substitutes a delicately plucked *petite reprise*.

Her performances are characterful and heartfelt: the Preludes expressive, the dances carefully articulated. She does, however, take liberties with the underlying rhythmic pulse. In some of the Preludes (of Nos 3 and 4 in particular) she carries it off by making them sound improvised, and in the epic Fifth, she signals the return to the opening material with an unmarked change in tempo. The dances, though,

are a different matter. Too often Tomkins trifles with the inherent rhythmic character, revelling in *rubato*, especially in the Allemandes – notes are stretched and *ritards* are inserted (No 2) while repeats are perhaps too freely interpreted (Nos 1 and 3). As a group, the Sarabandes are threatened by slow tempi: at her best, Tomkins conveys a palpable sense of private reverie (No 3) and even tragic lament (No 2), even if she does sap the musical momentum elsewhere (Nos 1, 2 and 5). An enormously enjoyable set of discs nevertheless.

Julie Anne Sadle

INTERVIEW

Tanya Tomkins

Most cellists decide at some point to record these Suites because they are among the repertoire’s greatest challenges. Creating a single interpretation is difficult because there is so little to go on and even the articulation is up for grabs. Ornamentation, too, can present problems because Bach writes out the music so specifically that you risk sounding ridiculous if you place your own compositional skills beside his. I consulted composer Eric Zivian about the Sixth Suite and he wrote a whole Double for the Sarabande, using just the general harmonic pattern and rhythm.

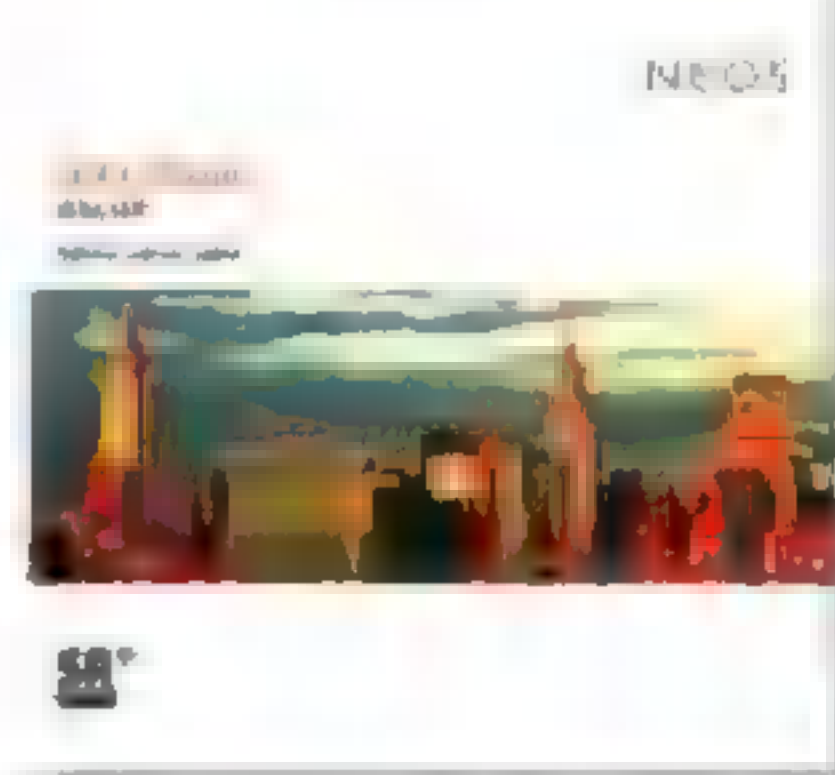
As a Baroque cellist you perform a great deal of continuo music, so this type of solo

playing doesn’t necessarily fit with your musical viewpoint. But certainly in the Sixth Suite, playing on a Baroque five-string instrument makes all the sense in the world in terms of ease of execution. On a four-string modern cello the suite is exceedingly virtuosic because it must be played in very high positions. Still, playing on five strings when you have always played on four forces you to make many adjustments!

In general a modern cello with its steel strings makes a smoother, more regulated, even sound. But the light Baroque bow and gut strings bring out the dance-like character of these works.

Interview by Charlotte Smith

Instrumental reviews



When Arnold Schoenberg issued his now famous decree – that John Cage was an inventor of genius, not a composer, because he had no feel for harmony – he failed to realise that Cage, along with about seven-eighths of the world's population, might conceive of music without reference to ideas birthed by Papa Bach or earlier. Cage's late-period "number pieces" espoused his concept of "anarchic harmony": the whole *raison d'être* behind conventional harmony

of course is that it isn't anarchic but, by handing musicians free-floating pitch material (to be played within a duration indicated in brackets above the staff) and encouraging the unprompted overlap of evolving parts, Cage liberated sound from any obligation to find its way home.

Naysayers moan that an ageing Cage exploited this set-up to crank out new works with ruthless, conveyor belt-like efficiency. But *Four*⁴, performed here by four British free improvisers, and *One*, played by a pianist famous for her New York School sympathies, tell us that the number pieces are what you make them. The score in this context isn't "the music": it's merely an instruction for how to embed sonic events inside silence, a rethink of notational principles that makes the Another Timbre disc so striking. Here are four musicians who live or die by what they find during improvisation, and the counterpoint of their chiselled sounds growing as they slide against the constraints of Cage's time brackets, which often plunges them into enforced silence, is a trip.

Sabine Liebner's textbook performance of *One* is one thing but her disc comes properly alive during *One*², where she walks between four pianos, loading each instrument with site-specific sounds – like that electronic trilling hum at 21'03" which subsequently reappears against the shifting sands of other emerging sounds – a process that "fakes" the essential number piece experience of a resonating chamber packed with intersecting echoes and shadows. *ASLSP*, meaning 'As SLOW as Possible', was written in 1985, just before the number pieces, and is a further meditation on time which unlocks basic principles that fed the number pieces and governed everything Cage wrote. He stood in opposition to Western harmony because harmonic function imposed a contrived, artificial time-flow against the harmony of

silence. We all know about *Flight of the Bumble Bee*-type virtuosity; but what exactly does playing chords and notes "as slowly as possible" mean? How slow is slow? Here Liebner is virtuosically sensitive to lending every sound dignity, space and significance, testing the grain, like seeing how slowly she can ride a bike before it stops and she falls off.

Phillip Clark

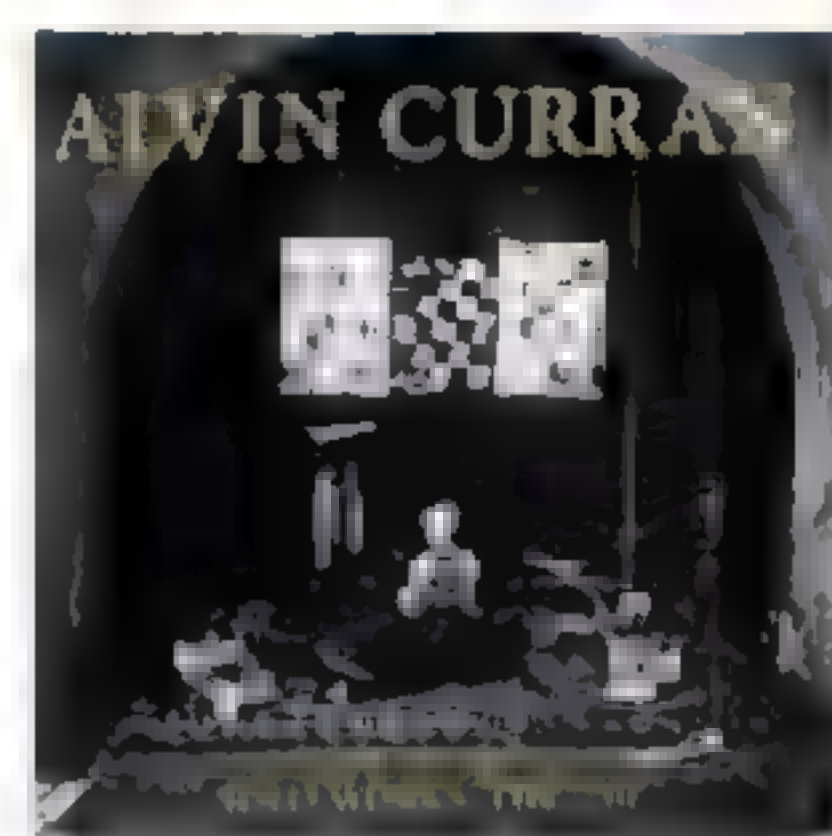
Curran

'Solo Works: The '70s'

Songs from the Magnetic Garden. Fiori chiari fiori oscuri. Canti illuminati – I; II. The Works
Alvin Curran *insts/elec*

New World ③ 80713-2 (3h 12' • ADD)

Ego is put aside here in Alvin Curran's searching reflections on everyday life



is not, I admit, a very promising title, evoking as it inevitably does the anaemic vamps and arpeggios with which Keith Jarrett managed to persuade gullible audiences he was touching the divine when, in fact, he was manipulatively deploying emotive melodic hooks and tried-and-tested harmonic sequences, all designed to push the right emotional buttons.

If you reckon "The Köln Concert" is bad, I suggest you listen to Jarrett's pretentious overdubbed multi-instrumental *Spirits* and then turn to this set, and you'll hear that Alvin Curran does everything Jarrett was trying to do but about a million times better. When Curran created this music (it was originally issued on vinyl between 1974 and 1982) he'd emerged from a stretching and searching seven years inside Rome-based improvisation collective Musica Elettronica Viva to re-engage with manuscript-paper composition – and this sequence of, what to call them, well let's say studio rethinks of live concerts, tailor-edited for LP release.

And editing is key. Jarrett's misplaced self-belief nudged him towards preposterously overblown box-sets, essentially statues to his own ego built on an assumption that we need to hear everything he ever wrote. Curran's judiciously edited assemblages of him playing keyboards, flugelhorn, miscellaneous percussion instruments and singing, all mulched into environmental sounds like cats purring, bees buzzing and the hollering of high-tension wires, becomes a diary of day-to-day thoughts, travels and musical experiences. But, unlike Jarrett, he edits his ego out; unlike The Holy One's tablets of stone, this music is thoughtful, amusing, erotic, whimsical, angry, honest, sometimes honestly uncertain. A proper slice of life.

Phillip Clark

Holst • Bowen

Bowen Suite in Three Movements, Op 53.

Suite No 2, Op 71 – Finale **Holst** The Planets
York2 (Fiona York, John York *pf*)

Nimbus ③ NI5871 (70' • DDD)

A long-hidden Holst score casts new light on his familiar astrological suite



Holst's *The Planets* is one of the wonders of English music. Less well known is its original two-piano score.

Completely forgotten is a third version for four

hands at one piano made by Holst, Nora Day and Vally Lasker, two colleagues and amanuenses who also helped him score the earlier versions (Holst suffered from painful neuritis in his right arm). It was published by Goodwin in 1923, since when it escaped entirely the attention of piano duos until the discovery by John York of an autographed copy in a cupboard in Holst's old room at St Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith. The pleasing link between Holst and York is that he and his wife Fiona both teach at St Paul's. They ("York2") first recorded this version in 2000 for Black Box (nla).

Their second recording is atmospherically captured at Wyastone Leys and very well played, "Mars", "Venus" and "Uranus" especially. It is not the pianists' fault that "Saturn" and "Neptune" do not lend themselves to the keyboard; the material lives in Holst's masterly orchestration. Similarly "Jupiter", when so reduced in scale, loses its effectiveness to a notably greater degree than in the two-piano version. Nevertheless, the Yorks illuminate this fascinating alternative view of a miraculous score with conviction and sensitive musicality.

Bowen's contemporary (1919) Suite in Three Movements, Op 53 (not Op 52 as listed, I think, if my copy of his *Mood Phases* is to be believed) is claimed as a first recording. Not so, but the Yorks' delightful take on this and the *Moto perpetuo* finale of Suite No 2 make unusual and apt companions for their valuable Holst find. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Liszt

Années de pèlerinage, S160; S161; S163.

Venezia e Napoli, S162

Louis Lortie *pf*

Chandos ③ CHAN10662 (161' • DDD)

Louis Lortie is spellbinding in Liszt's evocative travel diaries



On this generously filled two-CD set, Louis Lortie gives us Liszt's complete *Années de pèlerinage*, repeating Book 2 (*Italie*), which he first recorded for

Chandos 20 years ago (9/91). Today he adds an increasing weight and intensity to his earlier facility, and the results – pianistically impeccable and of a thrilling spontaneity – always suggest a live rather than studio experience. As responsive to Liszt's rhetorical storms as to his more delicate and picturesque brilliance, he makes light of every difficulty; and, whether recalling the mountain horns that echo across the Swiss mountains in "Chappelle de Guillaume Tell", gliding us rapidly across the lake of Wallenstadt (where Marie d'Agoult, Liszt's mistress of the moment, could hear "a melancholy harmony, imitative of the sigh of waves and the cadence of oars") or showing a formidable force and velocity in "Orage" (once appearing in a programme as "Orange"), he is at one with every potent evocation.

However, it is in the Third *Année* that Lortie is at his greatest. Liszt was too restless and complex to find a simple solace or resolution in his religious preoccupation and here, for the greater part, his pained and introspective utterance tells you that if it had not been for his musical outlet, devout Catholic that he was, he may well have attempted suicide. Music of a dark-hued austerity, the only positive light in this book is shone in the glittering cascades of "Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este". Here I would have welcomed less fluidity and a sharper definition but elsewhere Lortie is entirely at one with such often agonised outpouring. Finally he takes us out into the sunlight, and if in the Tarantella from *Venezia e Napoli* he is hard-pressed to match Marc-André Hamelin, his fellow French-Canadian, whose dexterity is truly phenomenal (Hyperion, 5/11), he weaves his own magic spell in the central Canzone. Overall, Lortie's is a superlative achievement and he is recorded in a bold and open acoustic. **Bryce Morrison**

Liszt

'The Complete Piano Music'

Leslie Howard *pf*

Hyperion © CDS44501/98 (99 discs: DDD)

Leslie Howard's 'Journey of a Lifetime' presented complete for Liszt's bicentenary



When Leslie Howard launched his complete Liszt cycle for Hyperion in 1985, could he have anticipated the amount of research, scholarship, detective work and restoration skills required to bring the project to fruition, let alone getting all of this music under his fingers and into his bloodstream? Surely no other pianist in history has had the vision, the patience, the facility, the curiosity and sheer willpower to track down and serve up every known note that Liszt wrote for

solo piano, each possible version of every published and unpublished composition, every alternative reading (Liszt was an inveterate reviser), from established large-scale masterpieces all the way down to the most obscure fragment, sketch and album leaf.

To celebrate Liszt's bicentenary in 2011, Hyperion has repackaged Howard's Liszt cycle in an attractively priced space-saving edition that deserves a place in any serious library. Rather than adhere to the original volume-number sequence, the discs are now reordered by category and housed in colour-coded cardboard sleeves for easy access. Each sleeve exterior indicates its respective disc's contents, together with timings, recording dates and venues. A 128-page paperback booklet contains a disc and track index, an index by S number (according to Humphrey Searle's pioneering catalogue, subsequently expanded upon and revised by Leslie Howard and Michael Short), an alphabetical index by work and an essay by Howard that serves as an introduction both to Liszt and to the recordings (Howard's original booklet annotations for each original release can be accessed via Hyperion's website).

Following the cycle volume by volume, one grasps the full scope of Liszt's pianistic evolution and complex, multifaceted personality. The early works and études encompassing the first six discs find the young composer flexing his muscles, so to speak, and laying the groundwork for his innovative style. Next are major original works and cyclical pieces, followed by dances, marches and pieces on national themes, then all of the operatic fantasies, transcriptions and paraphrases on 13 discs. After 11 discs' worth of concert transcriptions, we find Liszt's prolific output of Beethoven and Schubert transcriptions, and conclude with the rarities, new discoveries and music for piano and orchestra. While none of Liszt's two-piano works are present, Howard includes the composer's significant four-hand transcription of his organ fantasy and fugue based on Meyerbeer's "Ad nos, ad salutarem undam" (partnered by the late Geoffrey Parsons), Berlioz's *Harold en Italie* (with viola player Paul Coletti) and the recitations with pianoforte.

The cycle's best performances continue to wear well. Just to cite a few examples, Howard persuasively fuses power, fluency and textual rectitude throughout the Beethoven symphony transcriptions, the unwieldy Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique* "de-orchestration" and the first version of "Vallée d'Obermann". He is also responsible for one of the fastest, most direct and clear-eyed modern recordings of the B minor Sonata. The Ballades, Polonaises, B-A-C-H Fantasy and Fugue, and Waltzes from

Gounod's *Faust* boast palpable dynamism while the *Valse-impromptu*, Berceuse, two Elegies and the *Faust Symphony*'s "Gretchen" movement transcription inspire some of Howard's most tender, nuanced work. The pianist nails certain *Transcendental Etudes* more successfully than others.

Feux follets' quicksilver introduction leads into an earthbound main section, yet the unnamed F minor is breathtakingly supple. Indeed, it would be too much to expect one person to play each and every Liszt composition equally well and the most dutiful of Howard's performances – such as the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* or the first two books from the *Années de pèlerinage* – fall flat when measured against other versions. Similarly, Howard's solid-enough double notes in the *Don Juan* Fantasy yield to Marc-André Hamelin's feathery nonchalance, while his square-toed Tarantella from Auber's *La muette de Portici* cannot match Earl Wild for fire and panache. Arrau's Verdi paraphrase recordings operate on an altogether higher level of finesse and tonal sheen.

Yet, when you consider the totality of Howard's achievement, his professionalism and integrity cannot be denied for one second, and he ought to look back on what he calls "the journey of a lifetime" with the strongest sense of pride, fulfilment and accomplishment. **Jed Distler**

Schumann

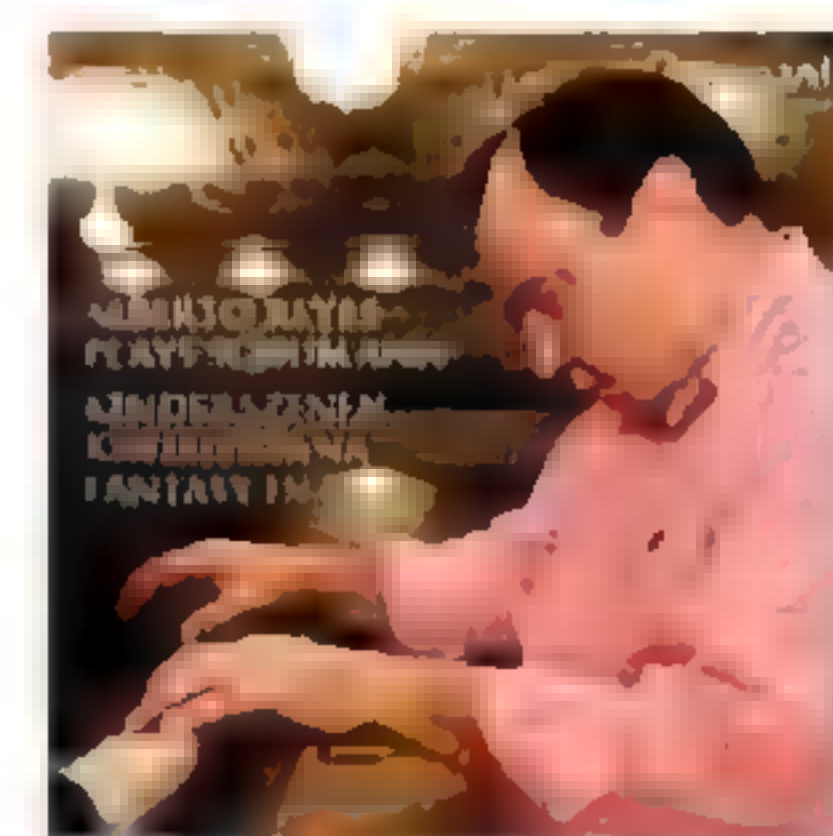
Kinderszenen, Op 15. Kreisleriana, Op 16.

Fantasy, Op 17

Alberto Reyes *pf*

VAI © ② VAI1273-2 (85' DDD)

Reyes's full-bodied, colourful sonority does justice to these three oft-recorded works



Piano aficionados may previously have encountered the artistry of Uruguayan pianist Alberto Reyes in a splendid and hard-to-find 1995 Connoisseur

Society release devoted to Liszt's Verdi paraphrases. Reyes proves equally at home with Schumann on many levels. Despite close microphone placement, Reyes's full-bodied, colourful sonority, effortless technical apparatus, keen contrapuntal prowess and innate grasp of Schumann's mercurial idiom do rewarding justice to these three oft-recorded works, once you accept the pianist's relatively restricted dynamic range (in comparison to, say, Horowitz or Argerich).

The pianist's tempi for *Kreisleriana*'s eight movements ensure maximum fluidity and clarity for both his fingers and his listeners, laced with effective yet discreet *rubato*. *Kinderszenen* also boasts beautiful and individual details, such as Reyes's bewitching, slower-than-usual "Von fremden Ländern" and





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“Träumerei”, variations of touch in the echoed phrases of “Bittendes Kind”, plus a soaring and poetic “Glückes genug”. The C major Fantasy’s first movement stands out for Reyes’s variety of articulation and his sensitively modulated soft playing, yet other recordings offer more impassioned sweep and surging drama when the music calls out for it (Arrau, Kissin, Horowitz, Perahia, and a staggering live version on VAI with Jeffrey Swann). Likewise, Reyes holds back in the notorious skips all pianists dread when navigating the central movement’s coda, although his subtle polyphonic balances prevent monotony in the obsessive dotted rhythms. Reyes is at his best in the third movement, which he unfolds with a natural lyrical grace and flexibility.

The self-penned booklet-notes discuss these works in terms of the recording process and the challenges they pose for pianists and engineers. That doesn’t prevent me from judging the performances from what I hear, rather than what I read. **Jed Distler**

Sibelius

Valse triste, Op 44 No 1 (two versions). Impromptu, Op 5 No 5. Ten Pieces, Op 58. Five Pieces, Op 85. Five Romantic Pieces, Op 101. Esquisses, Op 114.

Vladimir Ashkenazy *pf*

Triton ⑤ EXCLO0017 (77' • DSD/DDD)

Ashkenazy draws on his symphonic experience for dark, eerie Sibelius



Having recorded what must equate to virtually the entire standard keyboard repertoire, Vladimir Ashkenazy follows his celebrated discs of Sibelius’s symphonies with a recital of the Finn’s piano music. And, while hardly diamond chippings from the master’s workshop, such an offbeat offering is of startling and absorbing interest. For Glenn Gould, who also recorded a selection of Sibelius’s piano music, “the style partook of that spare, bleak, motivically stingy counterpoint that nobody south of the Baltic ever seems to write” – an idiosyncratic statement that captures something of the pervasive oddity of these ultra-northern experimental offshoots from the composer’s genius.

For Ashkenazy this was clearly a labour of love. In the macabre *Valse triste* he subtly points one unsettling change of direction after another (as if to underline his love for this transcription he plays it twice, the second time on Sibelius’s own piano). The “Reverie” from Op 58 suggests a bitonal syncopation while the “Air variée” remembers Bach’s contrapuntal writing. There is a mock-Baroque polyphony in the Minuet from the same set, and if the flowers of Op 85 recall Sibelius’s modest wish “to provide his children with bread and butter”,

there is much else in this fascinating programme to evoke an eerie play of northern lights across a frozen landscape. Many of these pieces would make excellent encores with which to bemuse an audience. Well recorded, they are, not surprisingly, given with total conviction and authority. **Bryce Morrison**

Carleton Etherington

Guilmant Grand chœur triomphal, Op 47

No 2^a Hollins Intermezzo^a Creston Toccata,

Op 70 No 3^b Karg-Elert Valse mignonne,

Op 142 No 2^b Ritter Sonata No 3^b

Best Concert Fantasia on a Welsh March^a

Salomé Cantilène, Op 48 No 9^a Peeters

Variations on an Original Theme, Op 58^b

Saint-Martin Toccata de la Libération, Op 37^a

Carleton Etherington *org*

Delphian ⑤ DCD34089 (76' • DDD)

Played on the ^a‘Grove’ and ^b‘Milton’ organs of

Tewkesbury Abbey

A delightful programme played on a magnificent abbey’s two instruments



Tewkesbury Abbey’s two organs are unusual in that they are both large, romantically inclined four-manual instruments not originally intended for the Gloucestershire building in which they now live. The “Grove” organ started life as a display instrument for the 1885 Inventions Exhibition in London, after which it went on something of a tour. When it arrived in Liverpool a year later, the city organist WT Best described it as “the finest organ of its kind that I have ever played upon”. It came to Tewkesbury in 1887, a gift to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, and has remained in the Abbey’s north transept ever since, its most recent alteration being a “conservative restoration” in 1980–81. The “Milton” organ dates back to 1631 when it was installed in Magdalen College, Oxford. From there it was appropriated by Oliver Cromwell, who took it as his personal instrument for use during his residence at Hampton Court Palace (where, according to legend, the poet John Milton played it). Magdalen claimed it back in 1661, only for it to be sold to Tewkesbury in 1736 – undergoing several overhauls and enlargements since, the most recent in 1997.

This disc, however, features just one organist and Carleton Etherington turns up a programme of sheer musical delight, keeping the mood light and the musical content entertaining without compromising integrity in the pursuance of cheap thrills. Thus Guilmant’s *Grand chœur triomphal* and the genteel Hollins Intermezzo in D flat have a strait-laced feel which might seem a little restrained but stands up to repeated listening and permits

close investigation of the “Grove” organ’s decidedly Victorian charms. He does let his hair down a little more on the more brightly coloured “Milton” organ with Karg-Elert’s Wurlitzer-inspired *Valse mignonne* and offers up playing of real authority in both Ritter’s magnificent Sonata and Flor Peeters’s little-heard Variations on an Original Theme.

In all his performances Etherington achieves a fine balance between displaying these two organs and conveying the music, and along the way some impressive virtuosity emerges, not least in a scintillating account of WT Best’s magnificent Concert Fantasia on “Men of Harlech” and Saint-Martin’s effervescent Toccata written to celebrate the Liberation of Paris in 1944. The recording is warm and generous. **Marc Rochester**

Miloš Karadaglić

Albéniz Suite española, Op 47 – No 1, Granada;

No 3, Sevilla; No 5, Asturias Anonymous

Spanish Romance (arr Hazell)^a Domeniconi

Koyunbaba, Op 19 Granados Danzas españolas –

No 2, Oriental; No 5, Andaluza Llobet

El testament de n’Amelia Tárrega Adelita.

Capricho árabe. Lágrima. Recuerdos de la

Alhambra Theodorakis Epitáfios – No 3, Mera

magiou; No 4, Vasilepses, asteri mou

Miloš Karadaglić *gtr* ^aEnglish Chamber

Orchestra / Paul Watkins

DG ⑤ ② (CD + DVD) 477 9693GH2 (66' • DDD)

Bonus DVD: ‘Miloš: A Journey’

Samey repertoire but this debut recital marks out a truly individual talent



I’m sure I said in my last classical guitar review that if I heard another recording of Domeniconi’s *Koyunbaba*, I’d scream. But I’m not screaming.

Which is down to the extremely persuasive musicianship of 28-year-old Montenegro-born London-based guitarist Miloš Karadaglić, who alas also includes on his otherwise impressive debut recording for DG a whole bunch of guitar favourites the world’s surely heard a million times over.

Yes, it’s a good job he’s such a wonderful guitarist, because his choice of repertoire isn’t exactly going to set the world on fire. Tárrega’s *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*, Albéniz’s *Asturias*, Llobet’s *El testament de n’Amelia* – even the loathsome *Spanish Romance* gets an airing with a super-schmaltzy arrangement for guitar and strings. I mean, come on. And yet, those new to the sound world of the classical guitar looking for a modern recording of classic repertoire more closely associated with the likes of Segovia, Williams and Bream – all idols of Karadaglić – will find this disc hard to beat.

There’s a fierce drive and precision tempered by a judicious use of *rubato* in both *Asturias* and

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We have the great pleasure of inviting you to Gabala in the spectacular South Caucasus mountain region of Azerbaijan. In this haven of outstanding natural beauty, exotic forests meet spectacular mountain peaks of up to 4500 metres in height. It is, without doubt, a stunning setting for a summer music festival.

The Gabala Music Festival 2011

The 2011 Gabala International Piano Competition runs from 15 to 22 July, offering a prize fund of more than \$60,000 as well as the opportunity to perform in London with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and to record a CD for record label Naxos.

The Music Festival follows from 22 July to 5 August, including symphonic, solo and chamber music as well as dance and Minstrel – a complex art form wedding classical poetry and musical improvisation that Azerbaijan has recognised as for its unique contribution to the world's cultural heritage.

Visiting artists in 2011 include the Symphony Orchestra of New Russia (Moscow), the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra, the Terzi Quartet, the Russian Ballet by Dame Marshall and Yuri Basharin, Rami Ashikbeyli and many more.

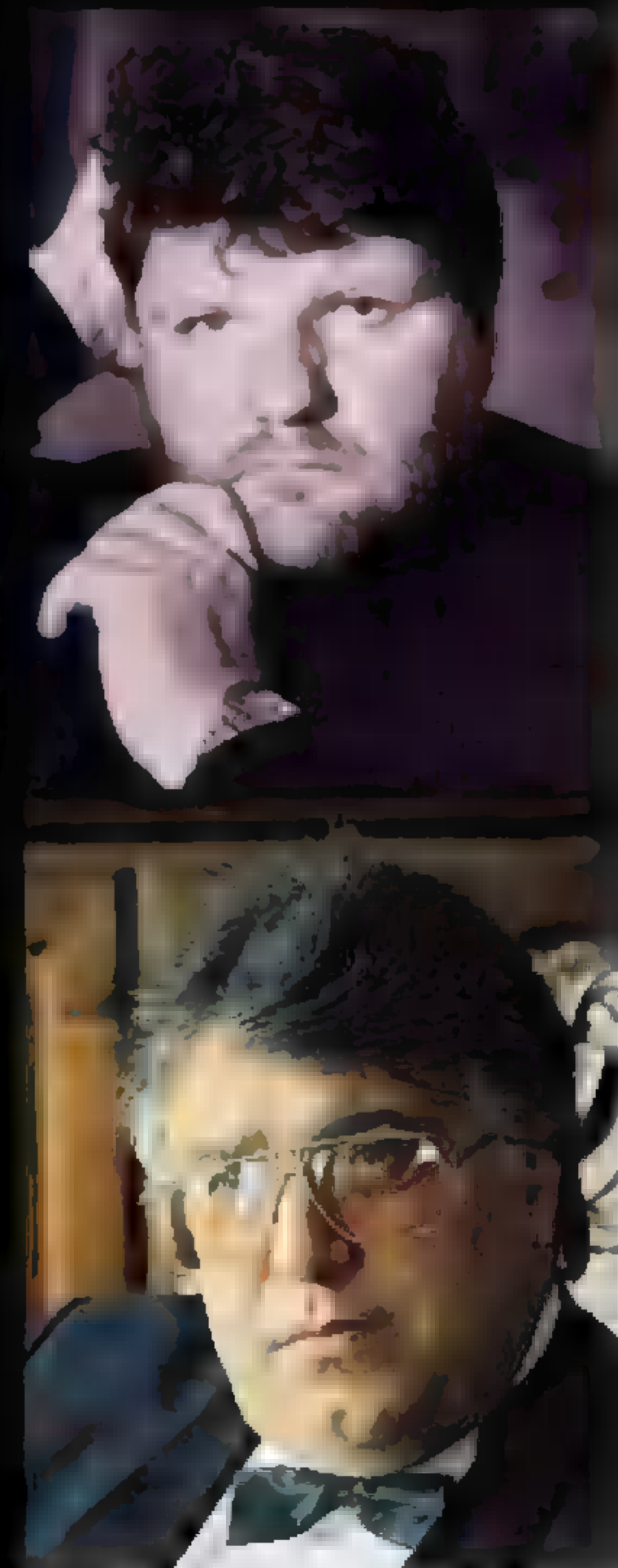
World-renowned pianists Oxana Yablonskaya, Sergiy Pertsev, Vladimir Krut'ev, Asanula Surian, Farhad Isakbayli, Elmar Suren-Nikol'skiy will take part in the Piano Academy from 22 July to 5 August.

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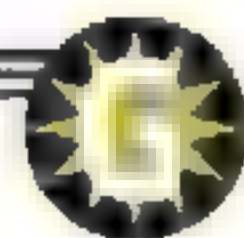
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the *Presto* of *Koyunbaba*, while the fragile frames of Tárrega's *Lágrima* and *Adelita* aren't made to bear the weight of "interpretation". Especially fine are Albéniz's *Granada* and Granados's *Andaluza* and *Oriental*, to which Karadaglić brings the same delicacy of expression heard in his performances of Theodorakis's *Epitáfios* Nos 3 and 4. Make no mistake: Karadaglić is a thoughtful, intelligent artist, as supple in his phrasing as he is generous in his use of colour. Let's just hope his next release gives us something to really sink our teeth into.

William Yeoman

'Bullets and Lullabies'

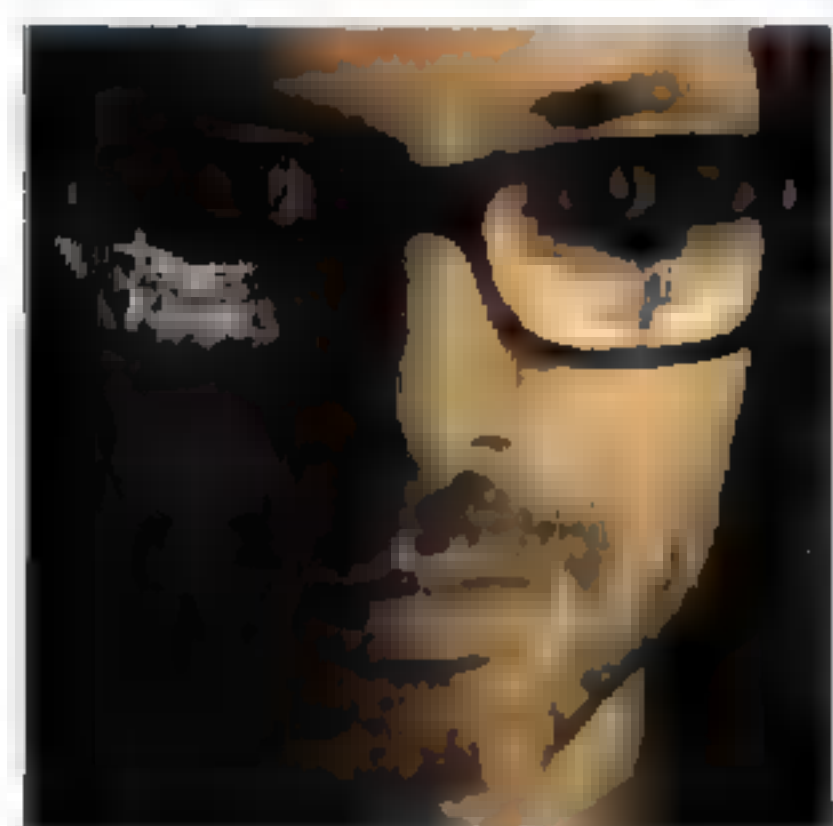


Alkan Grande Sonata, 'Les quatre âges', Op 33 – 20 ans **Beethoven** Piano Sonata No 18, Op 31 No 3 – Scherzo **Blumenfeld** Etude for the Left Hand, Op 36 **Brahms** Intermezzo, Op 117 No 1 **Chopin** Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11 – Romanza. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58 – Finale **Debussy** Suite bergamasque – Clair de lune. La plus que lente **Grieg** Berceuse, Op 38 No 1. Peer Gynt – In the Hall of the Mountain King **Moszkowski** Etude, Op 72 No 6 **Rachmaninov** Prelude, Op 23 No 10 **Ravel** Le tombeau de Couperin – Toccata. Pavane pour une infante défunte

James Rhodes *pf*

WCJ © 2 5249 83583-2 (73' • DDD)

An intriguing collection, programmed with sense and played with panache



James Rhodes's first release since signing with Warner Classics and Jazz encompasses two distinct and relatively brief recitals made up of short

pieces and single movements from larger works. Disc 1, "Bullets", features selections that are either toccatas, toccata-like or involve busy, perpetual-motion figurations. By contrast, Disc 2's "Lullabies" are not so much lullabies as slow, lyrical pieces. Rhodes's programming sense and canny running orders are worthy of any self-respecting DJ. The finale of Chopin's B minor Sonata, for example, easily slips into Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King" (dazzlingly transcribed by Grigory Ginzburg). Also notice how the "walking" accompaniment of the slow movement of Chopin's E minor Concerto (via Balakirev's solo transcription) sets the stage for Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, or how the leisurely unfolding textures of Debussy's "Clair de lune" are not far removed from Brahms's Op 117 No 1 Intermezzo.

As usual, Rhodes's performances are intelligent and provocative in a good way. Although he may dispatch the whirling first movement of Alkan's *Les quatre âges* with Marc-André Hamelin's smooth sheen, he pays keener attention to the left hand's supportive underpinnings, while

Moszkowski's F major Etude comes off less like an athletic stunt than a graceful dance – and that's a compliment! The way Rhodes imparts solidity and shape to the Chopin sonata finale's unwieldy left-hand figurations makes me curious to hear how he'd play the first three movements. Although Rhodes's slow-motion unfolding of the two Debussy pieces renders the music static and inert, keener attention to textural delineation helps the pianist more successfully sustain similar tempi in Rachmaninov's G flat Prelude and the Brahms Intermezzo. In addition to the clear and robust recorded sound, Rhodes sweetens the ante by providing his own disarming, witty and musically insightful booklet-notes. However you respond to Rhodes's pop persona – inescapable in the way this disc is presented – the fact is that he's a pianist who can deliver the goods and has something to say. **Jed Distler**

'Liuto con forza'

Hambraeus Varianti per liuto solo **Nilsson** Luta

Peters Piece for Lute and Live Electronics

Ekström Vision and Ashes **Karkoff** Four Pieces

for Lute **Olofsson** Chemin de silence I-III

Peter Söderberg *lte/theo*

Phono Suecia © PSCD186 (60' • DDD)

Strength of intent results in new music for lute that's rooted in the past



The title of this disc may appear oxymoronic but, here, "strength" is of purpose as much as anything else. The lute has enjoyed a striking revival in Scandinavian countries (a distant echo of Dowland's visit, perhaps?), so the prospect of an all-Swedish contemporary lute recital isn't as *recherché* as all that. In fact, each of these composers rises to the challenge of writing for the instrument idiomatically while avoiding overt pastiche (though the middle movement of Lars Ekström's *Vision and Ashes* for theorbo admittedly comes close).

One option is detuning, which works particularly well on the instrument because its "courses" (as the pairs of strings are called) are either at the unison or the octave. Bengt Hambraeus changes these to sevenths and seconds respectively, which seems to multiply the lute's harmonic spectrum exponentially. Hambraeus's *Varianti per liuto solo* (his last completed work) is also the most inventive piece here in its treatment of the instrument, which sounds violently forceful towards the end. Ivo Nilsson explores microtonal tunings clustered in clear pitch areas, returning us to a more familiar, gentler idiom, while the effect in Kent Olofsson's work is altogether more fragmented. With the exception of Erik Peters, who pits the soloist against recorded electronics, the emphasis is overtly on

polyphony, or the memories thereof. Ingvar Karkoff's four short pieces are related mobiles (think Stockhausen's *Tierkreis* in the version for music boxes), recombining and revisiting the same materials differently each time.

All in all, this recital makes an exemplary case for the lute as a contemporary instrument. More information would have been welcome (on Peter Söderberg's instruments, or on his plucking technique from work to work) but, both in conception and execution, this carries conviction, forcefully. **Fabrice Fitch**

'La valse à mille temps'

Brahms Waltzes, Op 39 **Ravel** La valse

(trans Garban) **Rihm** Mehrere kurze Walzer

Schubert/Brahms Deutsche, D366

R Strauss Rosenkavalier Waltzes (arr Singer)

Inge Spinette, Jan Michiels *pf*

Fuga Libera © FUG577 (73' • DDD)

Do I hear a waltz? Yes – 54 of them, and the result is an endurance test



There are 54 tracks on this disc, 33 of them lasting under a minute. Only the *Rosenkavalier* Waltzes and *La valse* last more than three.

Seventeen Schubert-Brahms Ländler and 16 Brahms Waltzes on the trot is a tough listen. There is no sustained musical thought, no development, nothing to get your teeth into. When these are punctuated not by contrasting material but by groups of 19 contemporary pastiches of the same genre by Wolfgang Rihm, the only triple measure I need is a scotch.

This might be an interesting exercise for completists or comparative musicologists but it makes for a pretty dull programme and does neither Schubert, Brahms nor Rihm any service to have their works heard in such a sequence. Relief of a kind from the unrelenting pulse and *mezzo-forte* dynamics comes in the form of the *Rosenkavalier* Waltzes, arranged for piano four-hands by the prolific Otto Singer (1863-1931). Here Inge Spinette and Jan Michiels find more tonal, atmospheric and dynamic contrast with playing of expressive charm, though whether their straight-stringed 1892 Érard is the right instrument for the work is a moot point.

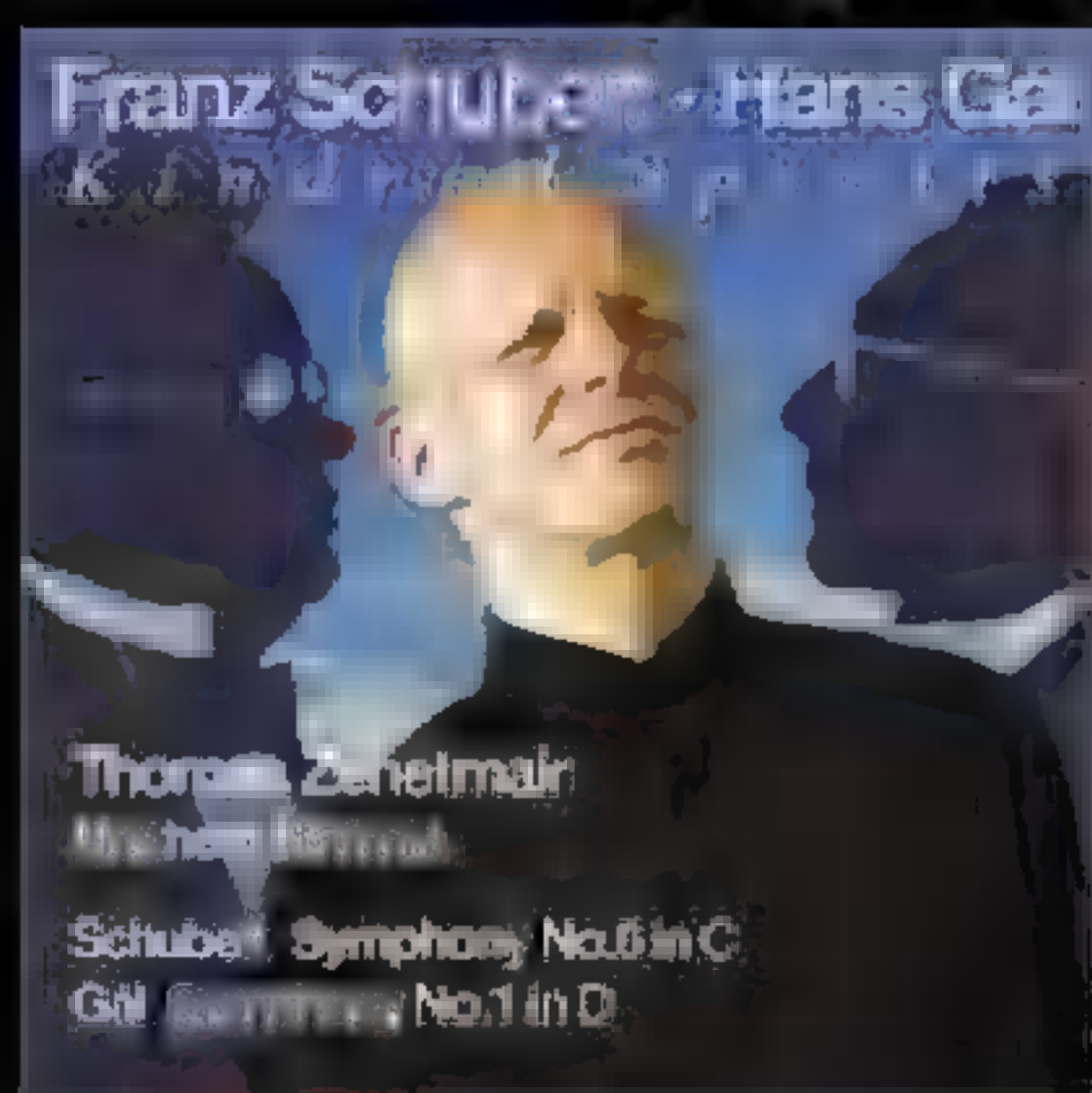
It is certainly not the right one for *La valse*, heard here in the transcription by Ravel's lifelong friend Lucien Garban (1877-1959). The composer's arrangement for two pianos is powerfully effective as, in the right hands, is his spectacular solo version. Here, compounded by the Érard's sonority, textures are muddled, bass-lines (so important for building tension, let alone underpinning) become lost and those gloriously uninhibited *glissandos* towards the end go for nothing.

Jeremy Nicholas



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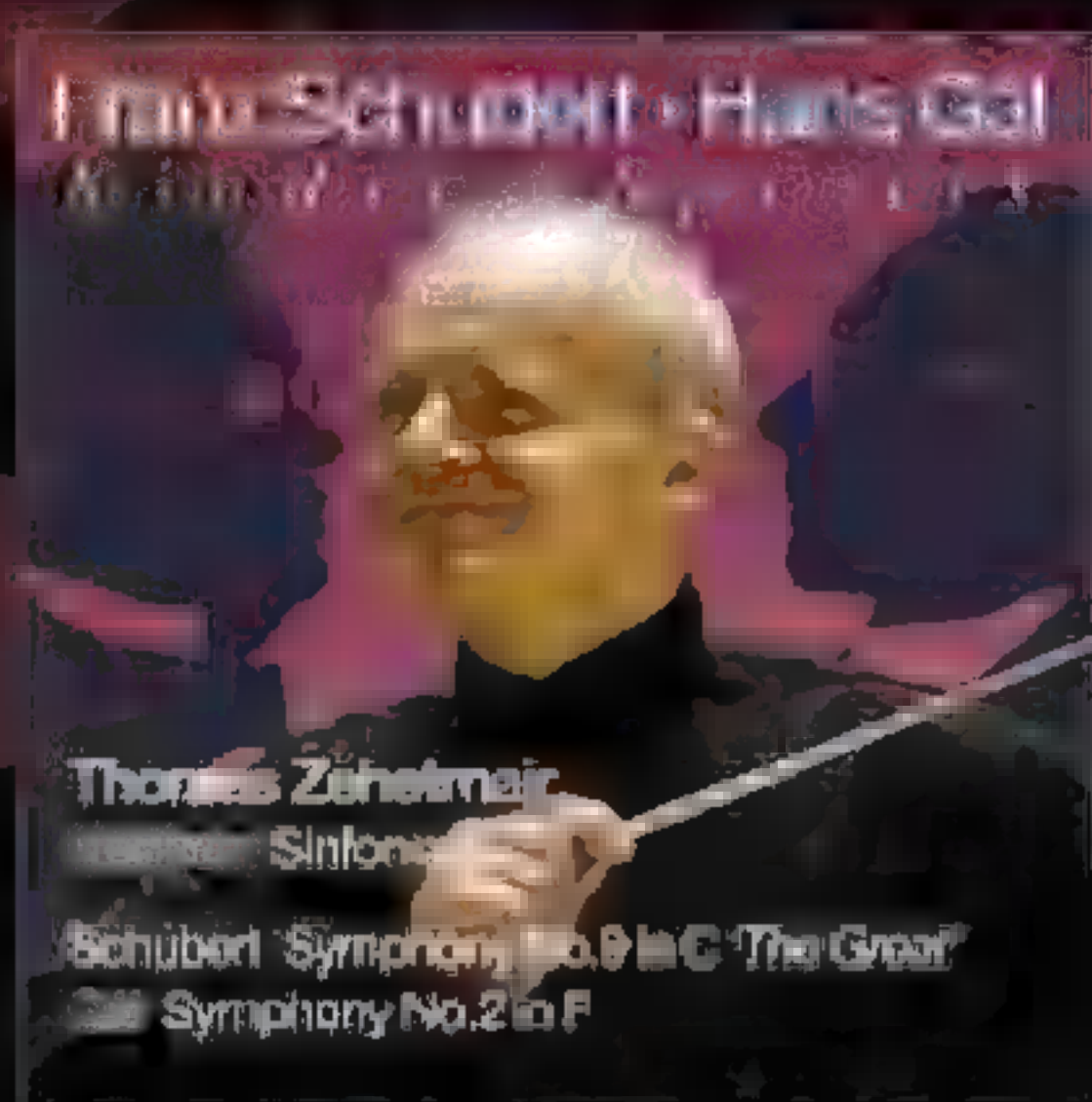


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ROUND-UP

Three artist portraits

Bryce Morrisson surveys box-sets that chart careers forged on tragedy

With these box-sets (a lucky 13 CDs), Brilliant Classics reminds us of three great pianists in danger of being eclipsed by other more recent, more familiar names. Remarkably, if coincidentally, Christoph Eschenbach, Byron Janis and Dino Ciani are united in differing forms of both literal and potential tragedy. Eschenbach's childhood trauma made music his true life-force and saviour. Janis's outwardly glamorous apprenticeship under Horowitz's engulfing personality threatened his own musical personality and led ultimately to a nervous breakdown. Later, an extreme form of psoriatic arthritis brought his career to a virtual end. Finally Ciani, greatly admired by Cortot, died in a car crash at the age of 32.

Such bleak backgrounds are, however, countered by playing of an often extraordinary quality and individuality. But if lovers of great piano-playing will have to invest in all three boxes, pride of place must surely go to **Christoph Eschenbach**. Celebrated as a conductor, his previous stature as a pianist during the 1950s and '60s is in danger of being forgotten. He was inspired by the likes of Furtwängler, Edwin Fischer and Clara Haskil, and mentored by George Szell and Herbert von Karajan, and the influence of such musicians is paramount. And whether you turn to Henze's uncompromisingly bleak Second Piano Concerto (a reflection of Shakespeare's sonnet, "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action") or Beethoven's

playing of the finest clarity, eloquence and integrity. In Beethoven's Op 106, Eschenbach shines an unforgiving light on its baleful utterance and, even when taking the final, cataclysmic fugue at a breakneck speed, he maintains an absolutely unfaltering command.

In late Schubert he is equally responsive to light and darkness, as finely sensitive as he is strong-minded. Everything is impeccably graded and, subjectively speaking, when you hear the closing bars of the B flat Sonata's *Andante*, you will surely sense a severing of all earthly ties. Again, "Träumerei", at the heart of *Kinderszenen*, is as lucid and serious as even the most ardent Schumann lover could wish, and Eschenbach's way with Chopin's 24 Preludes makes you long to hear him in more Chopin. Here, there is nothing of, say, Pogorelich's posturing or Argerich's occasional hysteria (her wild, telescoping frenzy at the climax of No 4 in E minor) but a constantly personal and refreshing sense of Chopin's glory. For good measure he adds the cloudy, love-lorn poetry of the isolated Op 45 Prelude and ends with a delectably light-fingered flight through the sunnier clime of the little A flat Prelude.

From Eschenbach to **Byron Janis** (originally Yankevitch, then Yanks and finally Janis), and a radically different pianist in both training and repertoire. Small wonder that the Russians gasped in awe at Janis's 1960 visit to Moscow, when he played three concertos in one evening, for it was never a case of quantity rather than quality. Janis's magnetism and the lean and hungry elements of his prodigious technique (a far cry from Russia's fuller, more opulent manner) sent pulses racing. Certainly you will hear few more propulsive, adrenalin-fuelled Rachmaninov Third Concertos. The skittering *scherzando* variation in the central Intermezzo features repeated notes like volleys

of machine-gun fire, and the force and intensity of Janis's way with the multi-note figuration at 6'35" in the finale will make even the most blasé listeners' hair stand on end.

Highly strung and playing as if possessed, Janis



exhibits the same qualities in Tchaikovsky's First Concerto (with the fastest second-movement *Prestissimo* interlude on record) and it was only in the Liszt concertos that I was reminded of a head-spinning experience in the Second Concerto many years ago at the Royal Festival Hall, London, where the playing became increasingly brittle and hyper-tense. Compared to Richter, Brendel and Zimerman, Janis's brilliance can seem limiting, suggesting a glare and theatricality noted in early estimates of Liszt. In Schumann, Janis is altogether more subdued, showing an independent blossoming away from Horowitz's



daemonic influence. If his Liszt burns with "a hard, gem-like flame", his Schumann has a gentleness and discretion, a warmth and flexibility heard at their height in the *Arabeske*.

Finally, **Dino Ciani** and the richest variety in Weber, Schumann, Debussy and Bartók. As personal as he is true to Debussy's inner vision in the 24 *Préludes*, his playing is a far cry from a more traditional, colder literalism. In "Voiles" he is as becalmed as the Ancient Mariner and in "Des pas sur la neige" he achieves an ultimate sense of negation. He sets about the serenade's



Dino Ciani:
rich variety

attempted seduction in a brisk, no-nonsense manner ("La sérénade interrompue") and his skim through "Les tierces alternées" is too rapid to capture fully its whirling enigma. Yet virtually all these performances are endlessly engaging and so, too, is Ciani's Weber, which he invests with an enchanting grace, vivacity and charm, never forgetting the Sonata's operatic inspiration. In Schumann's *Noveletten* he is once more warmly sympathetic to some of the composer's most

mercurial mood-swings, and in Bartók's *Out of Doors* he makes you enter a world of the most fastidiously worked menace and violence. So it says much for Ciani's genius (the word is suitably quoted on the sleeve) that his quality is sustained through the widest variety of styles.

All the recordings have been excellently remastered and Ateş Orga's perceptive notes are an added blessing. A reminder and a remembrance, they already capture another time, another place. ☉



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VariousCpsrs The Early Recordings **Eschenbach**
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Vocal

A Handel Feast • Maltman's Schöne Müllerin • A Zelenka masterpiece unveiled

JL Bach

Trauermusik

Anna Prohaska *sop* Ivonne Fuchs *contr* Maximilian Schmitt *ten* Andreas Wolf *bass* RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / Hans-Christoph Rademann

Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMC90 2080 (77' • DDD)

A gilded score from a distant cousin of Johann Sebastian Bach



Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was acutely aware of the extremes of fame and obscurity that lay between him (and his arguably even more celebrated brother,

Johann Christian) and generations of loyal Thuringian servant-musician Bachs over the 17th and early 18th centuries. Johann Ludwig is something of an exception. A distant cousin of Johann Sebastian, he broke the mould and landed a major post at the court in Meiningen, becoming widely known in the urbane company of poets, opera composers and aristocrats: one senses an envious glance from Leipzig. Indeed, Ludwig's *Trauermusik* of 1724 might attract instant comparison with Bach's *Trauer Ode* from a few years later but, actually, they are worlds apart – even with Bach toying with Enlightenment.

This significant tripartite oratorio is a meticulously planned work for Ludwig's employer, Duke Ernst, who with assiduous foresight wrote the text (and a sermon) for his own funeral. Hans-Christoph Rademann and his Berlin forces present Ludwig's easy, à la mode craftsmanship with clear-sighted and colourful advocacy. This is music which satisfies more in its sympathetic treatment of text than pure musical invention, which tends towards short-windedness.

Yet unmannered and irradiating solos from Rademann's singers allow the listener to penetrate the courtly values of employer and employee in unusually close collaboration – and the whole amounts to rather more than the individual parts. Whether pouring a genial affect over "O Herr, ich bin dein Knecht" ("O Lord, I am thy servant"), propelling graphic syncopations in a 'rage' aria or embalming the Duke's poems with deftly brushed duets, Ludwig makes his illustrative mark, albeit eschewing counterpoint on principle.

Ludwig's instrumental armoury is impressive in places – how often do you hear trumpets at funerals (including a rare C minor obbligato aria)? The sacrifice of thanksgiving which ends the work also employs a virtuoso bassoon part in "Lob und Dank", an elegantly delivered tenor aria which, along with Anna Prohaska's brilliant final soprano aria, comes closest to first-rate Telemann.

Rademann makes as strong a case for Ludwig's best surviving work as one can imagine. Part 3 contains the most distinguished material – by some way – but the grand funeral journey from "prison" to "freedom" celebrates a strangely compelling and unusual monument to late-Baroque German music. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

JS Bach

St Matthew Passion, BWV244

Gerd Türk *ten* Evangelist Peter Harvey *bass* Christus Amaryllis Dieltiens, Siri Karoline Thornhill *sops* Tim Mead, Matthew White *countertens* Julian Podger, Charles Daniels *tens* Sebastian Noack *bass* Kampen Boys' Choir; Netherlands Bach Society / Jos van Veldhoven Channel Classics ⑤ ② CCSSA32511

(165' • DDD/DSD • T/I). Recorded live at Grote Kerk, Naarden, Netherlands, April 2010

Selected comparison:

Dunedin Consort, Butt (4/08) (LINN) CKD313

Style you'd expect from Veldhoven but it's the sound that's the star here



The fashion for "single-voice" Bach Passions has happily shifted from prescriptive theorising on contemporary practice to rhetorical impact for the "here and now". Much of this triggered John Butt's captivating and often emotionally raw reading of the *St Matthew* for Linn in 2006. Jos van Veldhoven adopts a similarly character-driven flexibility in his wieldy vocal and instrumental ensemble, most notably emphasising the enhanced narrative responsibility of Choir 1. Yet wrong-footing the traditional symmetry between the double choirs and orchestras is hardly a deal-breaker in the evolution of a powerful, dramatic *St Matthew* which depends on an elusive relationship between so many complex and inter-reliant elements.

This live recording is tellingly paced and seriously considered, as you would expect

from Veldhoven. The over-riding sensibility is one stripped of vanity and yet of astute and purposeful coloration, often through startling projection, compelling dynamic control and even *rappresentativo*-style singing (Julian Podger's potent "O Schmerz" and "Geduld" are not always pretty but, goodness, you feel the pain and joy).

For a work which makes so many musical and technical demands, the live context should perhaps encourage fewer and more allowances respectively: the inexorable path towards Christ's death and journey of fear, anticipation and resignation is deeply felt here. Yet so refined, rich and intense is the surround-sound experience from Channel Classics that infelicities of vocal production and intonation can startle more than in most recordings – notably internal voicing in the "choruses" and variable soloists from a director who can never quite assemble his dream team.

Gerd Türk's Evangelist, as with Peter Harvey's Christus, takes time to warm up (and Türk is no longer as honeyed in the upper reaches as he once was) but these develop into highly accomplished performances; Türk is a subtle and excitable commentator, in whom tensions between pure reportage and discipleship are creatively harnessed. Harvey becomes the master of all he surveys and the string accompaniments are exquisitely judged, as are the juxtapositions between these contributions and the crowd's interjections.

Too many set-piece arias are underwhelming, however. The problem is not simply one of vocal inconsistency but Veldhoven's priority for imposing a text-oriented, almost 17th-century aesthetic on the *St Matthew* at the expense of abstract beauty. "So ist mein Jesus nun gefangen", a duet of such breathtaking radiance, is so tonally unyielding and short of mystery that I was running back to Fritz Lehmann from 60 years ago. "Erbarme dich", alas, falls into the same trap. Bass Sebastian Noack does something to redress the balance with a vibrant and cultivated contribution.

Veldhoven's first recording of the *St Matthew* from 1997 (5/98) is rather more rooted and affecting than this sophisticated, incisive and emotionally graphic account. But the advantage here is a supreme recorded sound which places the listener in the solar plexus of Bach's peerless score. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

JS Bach

St John Passion, BWV245

Markus Schäfer *ten* Evangelist Thomas

Oliemans *bar* Christus Carolyn Sampson *sop*

Michael Chance *countertenor* Markus Schäfer,

Marcel Beekman *tens* Thomas Oliemans *bar*

Peter Kooij *bass* Cappella Amsterdam; Orchestra

of the 18th Century / Frans Brüggen

Glossa Ⓢ GCD921113 (111' • DDD)

Recorded live at De Doelen, Rotterdam, the

Philharmonie, Haarlem, and the Stadsgehoorzaal,

Leiden, March-April 2010

A tale of three cities and the mystery of the chorale missing its fifth line



This "live" recording will gladden the heart of anyone who is weary of the small-scale, one-to-a-part performances that have become fashionable in recent years. Cappella

Amsterdam numbers only 24 singers but they produce plenty of decibels when required.

Frans Brüggen follows the first version of 1724. The opening chorus, "Herr, unser Herrscher" is very fine. The repeated bass notes of the introduction are marked rather than emphasised but there's still an inexorability to the phrasing, with an impassioned *crescendo* leading up to the entry of the chorus. From time to time, notably at 5'47", the mournful oboe of Frank de Bruine cuts through the texture. Brüggen slows down for the cadence at the end of the "A" section rather than pushing on, which might disconcert some listeners.

It's not all as memorable as that. The chorus accusing Peter of being one of the disciples has a feeling of suppressed excitement and "Weg, weg mit dem" is properly vigorous; but the chorus preceding the latter is bland and, earlier still, the chromatic baying of "Wir dürfen niemand töten" lacks fierceness.

The soloists are a mixed bag. As the Evangelist, Markus Schäfer paces the recitatives well, his tone reminiscent of Peter Schreier's: he is spirited in the lead-up to "Nicht diesen, sondern Barrabam", and he doesn't make too much of a meal out of Peter's denial. If his fellow tenor, Marcel Beekman, sounds hectic in "Ach mein Sinn", it's a quality that makes "Erwäge" more endurable than usual. Carolyn Sampson dispatches her two arias in style, "Zerfließe, mein Herze" being particularly limpid. "Es ist vollbracht" is extremely slow but Michael Chance sustains his line fearlessly.

The recording, taken from performances in three different cities, is poorly balanced in places; and in what must be a recording producer's nightmare, the fifth line of the chorale "In meines Herzens Grunde" is missing. **Richard Lawrence**

JS Bach

Six Motets, BWV225-30. Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn, BWV Anh159

Vocalconsort Berlin / Marcus Creed

Harmonia Mundi Ⓢ HMC90 2079 (71' • DDD)

Life-affirming singing of Bach's motets conceived with subtlety and skill



Alongside the familiar six motets, this CD includes *Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn*, a composition formerly attributed to JC Bach (1642-1703).

Hearing these seven works collectively, one can appreciate Bach's imaginative choice of celebratory and contemplative texts from the Bible and elsewhere. One can also marvel at his virtuoso contrapuntal writing and endless variety of choral scorings.

The 18-strong Vocalconsort Berlin give superb performances throughout the disc, with perfect ensemble and impeccable balance. Bach's slurs are beautifully observed and there's a pleasing variety of articulation in the many quaver/semiquaver runs. Compare the light dancing quality of the opening of *Singet dem Herrn* with the smoother polyphony of *Der Geist hilft* and the energetic bite of the Alleluia from *Lobet den Herrn*. Marcus Creed's tempi are expertly judged, ranging from the slow, calm repose of "Gute Nacht" from *Jesu, meine Freude* to the lively one-in-a-bar swing of the concluding Alleluia from *Singet dem Herrn*. Gentle instrumental support is supplied by continuo organ and violone, the microphones just occasionally spotlighting an organ chord or countermelody. The studio-based recording gives clarity to the overall texture, though at the expense of atmosphere. I can imagine some listeners longing for the natural warmth of a church acoustic rather than the artificial reverberation of a modern studio. In today's troubled, discordant world, this CD can be highly recommended for bringing us the heavenly harmony of a supreme composer allied to the Vocalconsort's joyful singing.

Christopher Nickol

Brahms

'The Songs of Johannes Brahms, Vol 2'

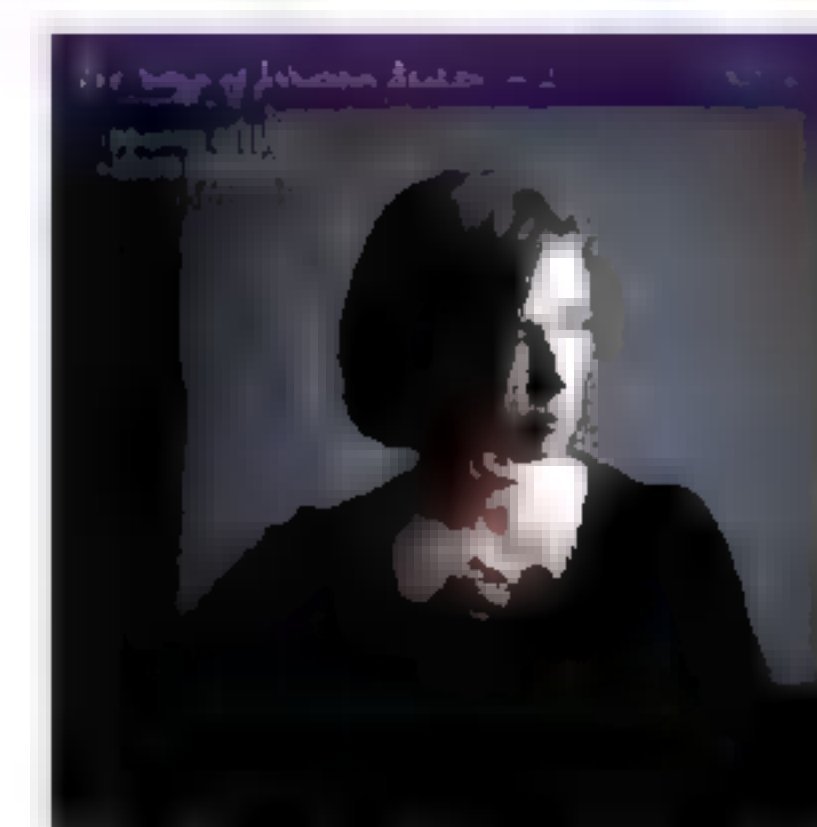
Sechs Lieder, Op 6 – No 4, Juchhe!; No 5, Wie die Wolke nach der Sonne. Die Liebende schreibt, Op 47 No 5. Acht Lieder, Op 57 – No 2, Wenn du nur zuweilen lächelst; No 3, Es träumte mir, ich sei dir teuer; No 4, Ach, wende diesen Blick; No 6, Strahlt zuweilen auch ein mildes Licht; No 7, Die Schnur, die Perl an Perle. Acht Lieder, Op 59 – No 3, Regenlied; No 4, Nachklang. Neun Lieder, Op 69 – No 1, Klage I, 'Ach, mir fehlt'; No 2, Klage II, 'O Felsen, lieber Felsen'; No 3, Abschied; No 4, Des Liebsten Schwur; No 9, Mädchenfluch.

Mädchenlied, Op 85 No 3. Sieben Lieder, Op 95 – No 1, Das Mädchen; No 6, Mädchenlied. Fünf Lieder, Op 107 – No 3, Das Mädchen spricht; No 5, Mädchenlied. Ophelia-Lieder, WoO22. Regenlied, WoO23. Deutsche Volkslieder, WoO33 – No 4, Guten Abend, mein tausiger Schatz; No 7, Gunhilde lebt gar stille und fromm; No 19, Nur ein Gesicht auf Erden lebt; No 20, Schönster Schatz, mein Engel; No 35, Soll sich der Mond nicht heller scheinen; No 36, Es wohnt ein Fiedler. Die Müllerin, AnhIII/13

Christine Schäfer *sop* Graham Johnson *pf*

Hyperion Ⓢ CDJ33122 (76' • DDD • T/t)

Schäfer joins Johnson for the latest in Hyperion's Brahms song survey



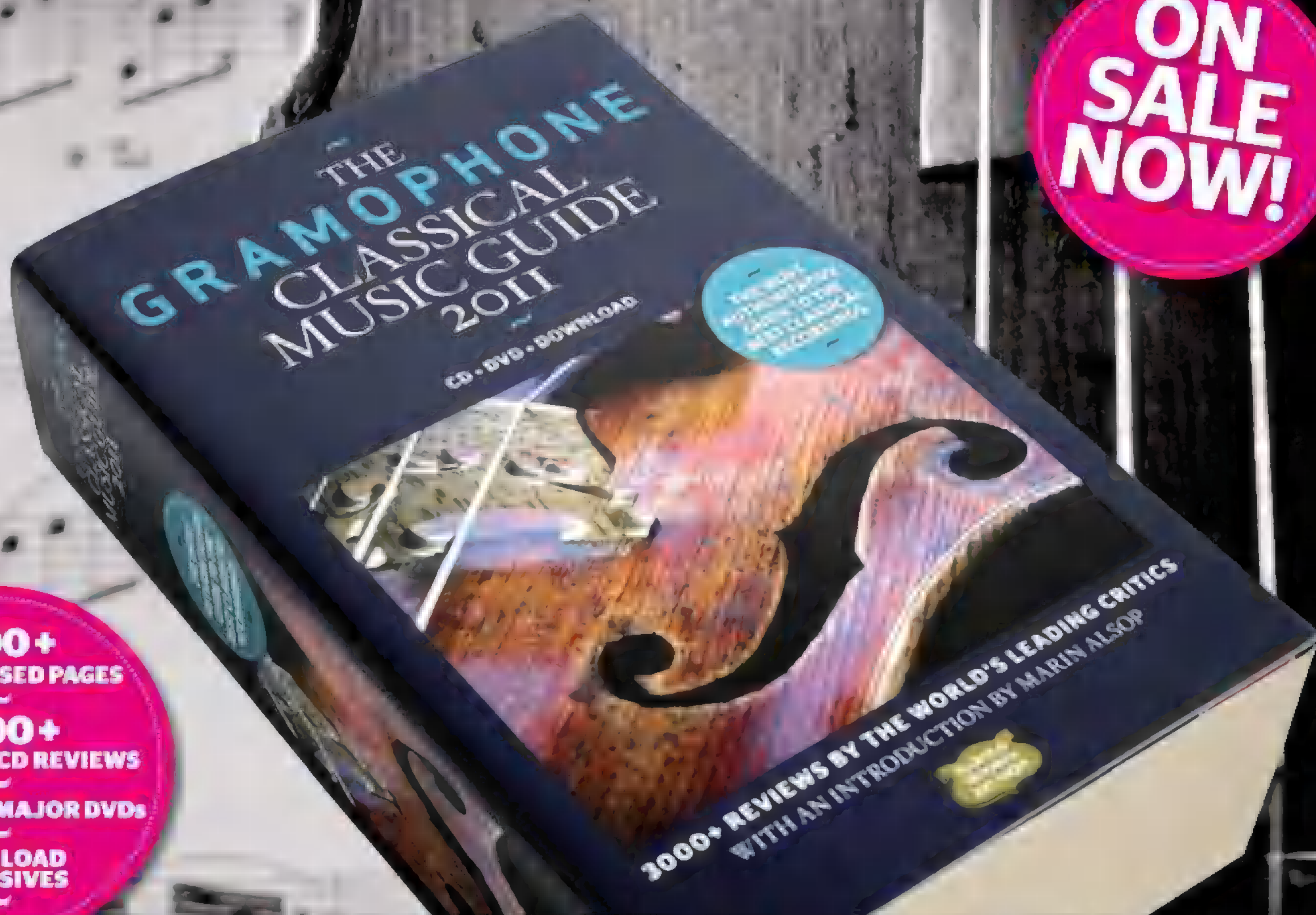
An upbeat Brahms Lieder recital is doubtless a contradiction in terms. But, as in the first volume of Hyperion's latest song intégrale (8/10),

Graham Johnson has devised a more-or-less chronological programme that balances unified individual groups with maximum variety of mood. Amid the quintessentially Brahmsian expressions of unstilled longing, loneliness and (in the related pair from Op 59, "Regenlied" and "Nachklang") nostalgia for childhood innocence, the spirit intermittently lightens: say, in the effervescent "Juchhe!", or the mounting glee with which the feisty protagonist of "Das Mädchen" maps out her future. Hugo Wolf's famous barb that "Brahms cannot rejoice" seems even more absurd than usual.

Fifteen years after Christine Schäfer launched the Hyperion Schumann edition, her pellucid high soprano has lost little of its purity and ease while encompassing richer, aptly Brahmsian shades. And her response to text, mood and harmonic colour is now still more vivid, whether in the mingled resignation and erotic languor of the Op 57 songs, the daughter's increasingly manic passion in "Mädchenfluch" or the sudden catch of joy in the voice (at "Welche Wonne") amid the melancholy reverie of the Op 59 "Regenlied".

Once or twice, both musicians favour controversially dreamy tempi. In "Des Liebsten Schwur", for instance, Schäfer catches the girl's guile and the confiding secretiveness suggested by the marking *heimlich* but misses the exuberant, Ländlerish gait, in response to Brahms's *sehr belebt*, heard on the recording by Juliane Banse and Helmut Deutsch (CPO, A/02). But far more often singer and pianist give unmitigated pleasure: in the touching little Ophelia songs, in the stark quasi-folk lament "O Felsen, lieber Felsen" and in the eager, unforced sense of character she brings elsewhere. Johnson always ensures that Brahms's often

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Gramophone Classical Music Guide 2011

intricate, contrapuntally inclined textures remain lucid. Hyperion's recording balances intimacy with a warm resonance. Johnson's illuminating commentaries on the individual songs are in a class by themselves, even if, as John Steane has noted before me, the print is so tiny as to threaten eye-strain.

Richard Wigmore

Delius

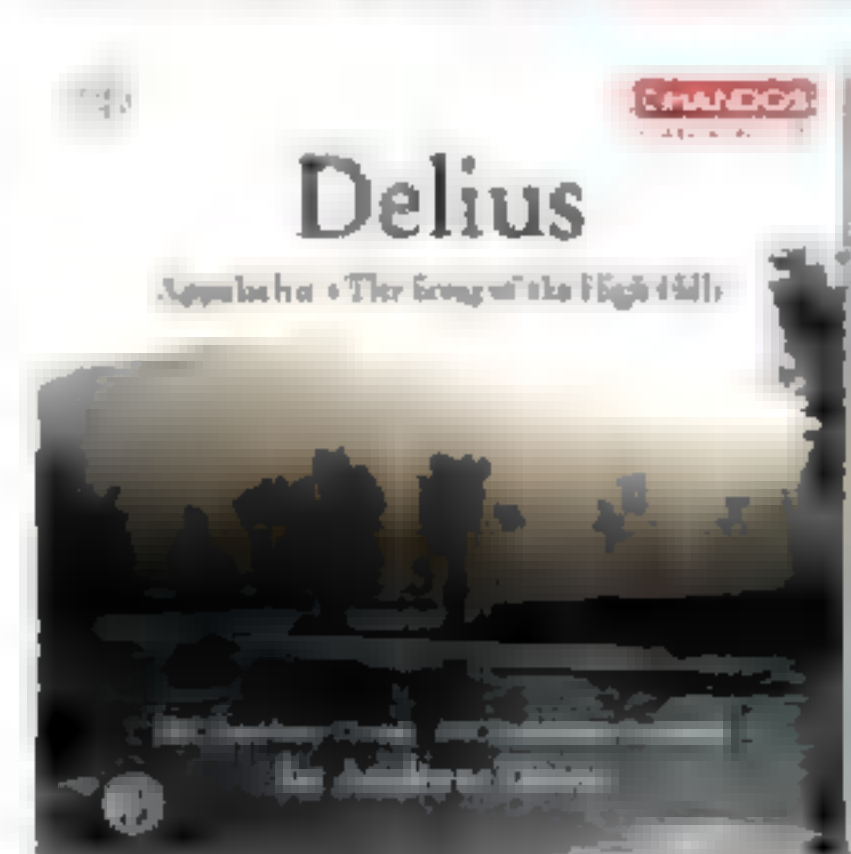
Appalachia^a. The Song of the High Hills^b

^bOlivia Robinson *sop* ^bChristopher Bowen *ten*

^aAndrew Rupp *bar* BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos ㉔ CHSA5088 (64' • DDD • T)

Davis emerges as a worthy Delian successor to Mackerras and Hickox



After the deaths of two great interpreters of Delius – Sir Charles Mackerras and Richard Hickox – I often wondered how soon it would be before another

sympathetic Delius exponent emerged. Clearly Sir Andrew Davis is just that. This is a magnificent, clear-edged recording of two challenging, problematic works, performed here with vibrancy and confidence. In the past it has always been the unconventional variation structure of *Brigg Fair* that has impressed me rather than the freer, more Strauss-inspired design of *Appalachia*. Yet here, the tempi, the lushness and balance of the orchestral timbres and the careful injection of character into the succession of 10 variations remind us of Delius's white-hot creative fertility in 1902 and of *Appalachia*'s rightful place beside Delius's two other great tone-poems, *Paris* and *Das Lebenstanz*. The role of the slave "song" is one of its most original features and it is hauntingly sung here; indeed, this and the other choral interjections make sense of that Damascene moment that the composer experienced in Florida and the desire thereupon to become a composer.

The much later, more complex *Song of the High Hills* (1915) is also handled with aplomb. The monumental outer sections have a purposeful sense of direction, while the spacious middle section, with wordless chorus, is not allowed to drag. Indeed, Davis's diligent control of this extraordinary material makes for compelling listening. More please, Sir Andrew! **Jeremy Dibble**

Handel

Athalia, HWV52 (London version, 1735)

Geraldine McGreevy, Nuria Rial *sops*

Lawrence Zazzo *countertenor* Aaron Mächler *treb*

Charles Daniels *ten* David Wilson-Johnson *bass*

Vocalconsort Berlin; Basle Chamber Orchestra / Paul Goodwin

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi ㉔ 88697 72317-2

(145' • DDD • S/T)

Unsatisfactory packaging mars this re-creation of Handel's London Athalia



Handel gave a series of different works entirely in English for the first time in Oxford in July 1733; his new Oxonian oratorio *Athalia* was several notches up in dramatic quality from his previously tentative achievements in English oratorio. *Athalia* eventually received its first London performances at Covent Garden on April 1, 1735, when Handel provided substantial modifications, most of them Italian arias for the castrato Carestini; other revisions for this curious revival seem to have been voluntary, such as a new overture and the replacement of the final chorus with an organ concerto (HWV292), its final movement adapted into an impressive choral "Alleluia".

This recording of the revised 1735 version represents the first time anyone has recorded one of Handel's weird bilingual versions of an English oratorio, so all involved deserve praise for helping us to understand how the composer took practical decisions in order to make a masterpiece performable in less than ideal circumstances. Regrettably, Sony's documentation and presentation is flawed and unsatisfying: the covers neglect to mention that this presents the bilingual 1735 revision (a sticker hardly suffices) and only three of the six singers/characters are listed on the outer packaging (Charles Daniels and David Wilson-Johnson deserve greater respect, and their characters are not insignificant). Worst of all, the sources, purpose and context of Handel's bilingual *Athalia* are misrepresented and under-explained in an inadequate booklet-note that fails to get to grips with this scholarly puzzle. At least Sony includes the libretto in the booklet, even if they do not see fit to include English translations of the Italian music.

The Basle Chamber Orchestra play Handel's new overture with delicious elegance. The Vocalconsort Berlin's English pronunciation is heavy-handed but the athletic leanness of the choral contributions is impressive (such as the magnificent double chorus "The might pow'r" that opens Part 2). Geraldine McGreevy sings the tyrannical queen Athalia with vividness, whereas the lighter timbre of Nuria Rial makes her a suitably chaste Josabeth; her lightly attractive phrasing is delightful in Handel's new setting of "Through the land so lovely blooming" (based on Ruggiero's "Bramo di trionfar", discarded from the compositional draft of *Alcina*). Lawrence Zazzo copes with the fiendish mezzo-soprano coloratura in the lengthy set-piece "Bianco giglio", and performs the languid "Cor fedele" beautifully (Handel adapted both of these from his motet

Silete venti); Joad's few English-text contributions include the new solemn aria and chorus "O Lord, whom we adore", which takes its thematic hooks from Ottone's powerful soliloquy "Voi che udite" in *Agrippina*. Charles Daniels's high tenor is mellifluous in Mathan's rapturous aria "Gentle airs, melodious strains" (which has lovely cello obbligato from Christoph Dangel); he also gets around the tricky coloratura in a short fast aria Handel added in 1735 for the emerging star tenor John Beard ("The gods, who chosen blessings shed"), and conveys an irritable bite in "My vengeance awakes me" (transferred in 1735 from the wicked Athalia to her apostate henchman). Goodwin's eye for detail and pacing are usually spot-on but intrepid Handelians should first become closely acquainted with the wonderful Oxford original masterpiece (versions by Hogwood or Neumann) before dipping into this fascinating alternative.

David Vickers

Lumsdaine

Soundscapes^a – The billabong at sunset (Lake Emu); Frogs at night; Raven Cry; Serenade; Hunting a Crested Bellbird for Dr Gilbert at Palm Creek. A Little Cantata – Tracey Chadwell in memoriam^b. Blue upon Blue^c. Six Postcard Pieces^d. A tree telling of Orpheus^e. Metamorphosis at Mullet Creek^f. A Norfolk Songbook^g. Cambewarra Suite^h

^{beg}Lesley-Jane Rogers *sop* ^{big}John Turner *rec*

^cJonathan Price *vc* ^{bdb}Peter Lawson *pf*

^{ae}Gemini / Martyn Brabbins

Métier ㉔ MSV28519 (120' • DDD)

A lesson in musical possibility and artistic skill from a composer of rare sonic vision



As a way of making what may or may not be music, placing microphones into urban or rural environments and assembling soundscapes in the studio from sounds

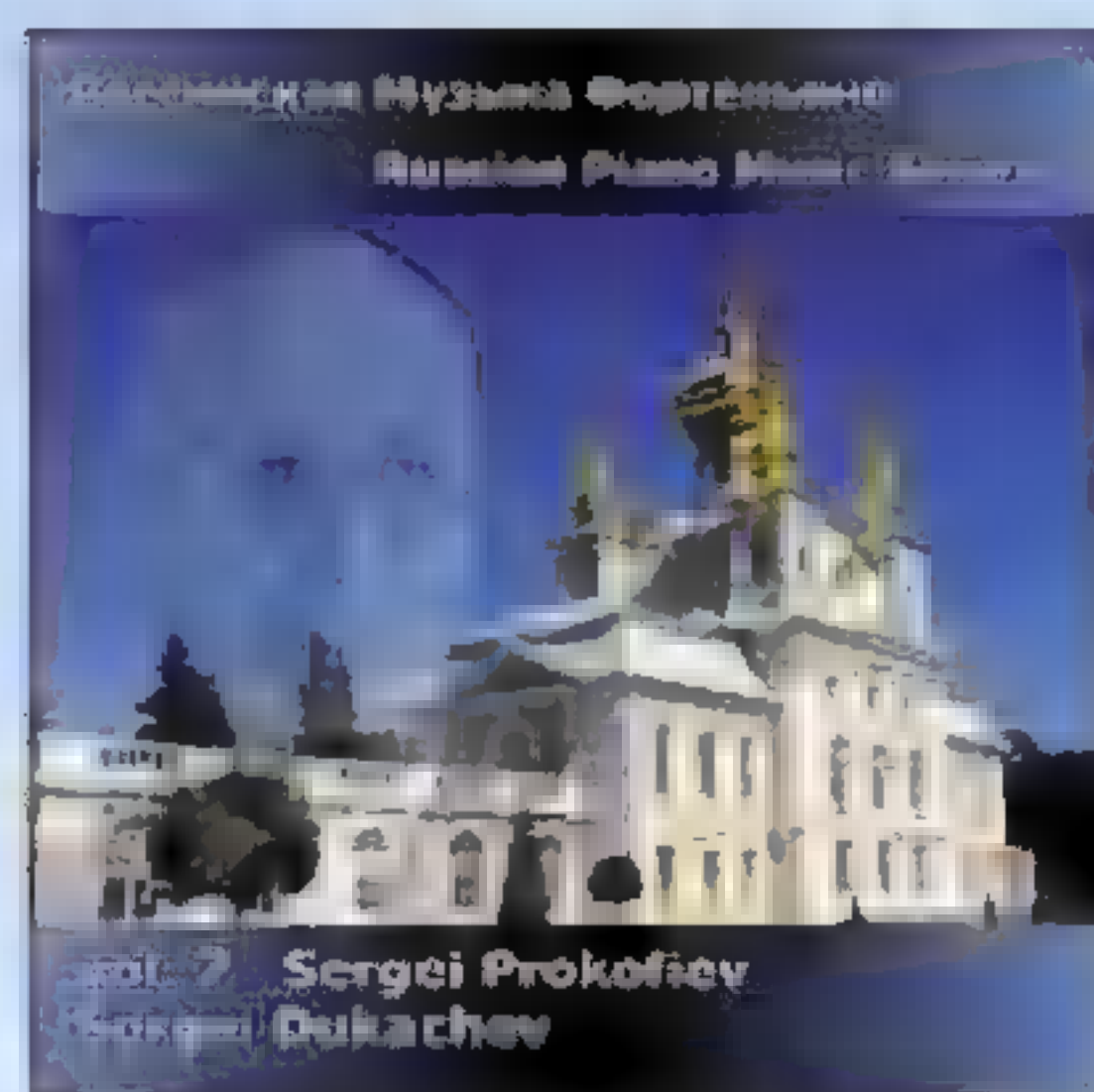
you harvest is a controversial way to make art. Classical music snobs, fond of preaching about what music "should" be – better, surely, to think about what the thing we love "could" be? – are minded to pooh-pooh field recording by pointing out that anyone can stick a microphone anywhere. Then again, any fool might have twigged that three Gs followed by an E flat was a smart way to open a symphony; only one man did, though, and to luddites everywhere I say it's not the material, it's what you do with it that counts.

By taking five of Sydney-born David Lumsdaine's field-recording-derived Australian soundscapes and interweaving them between his meticulously organised instrumental and chamber pieces, this superb anthology reveals what a false dichotomy the whole field recording/"conventional" composition debate



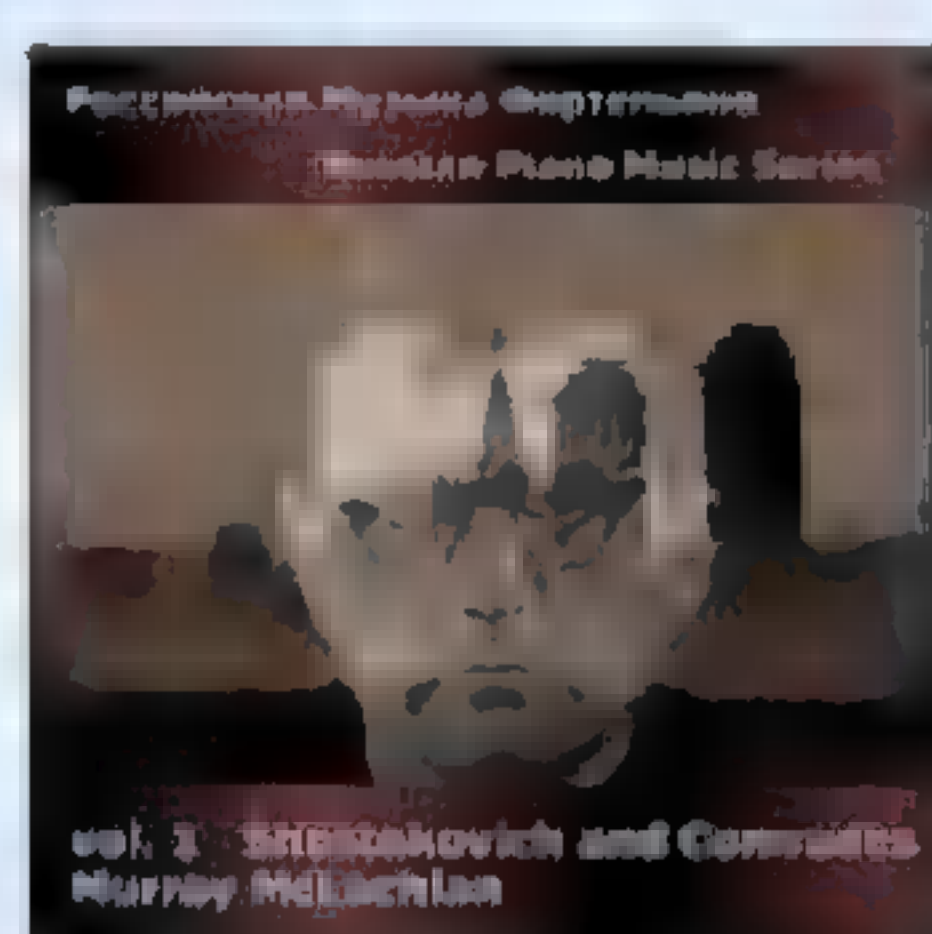
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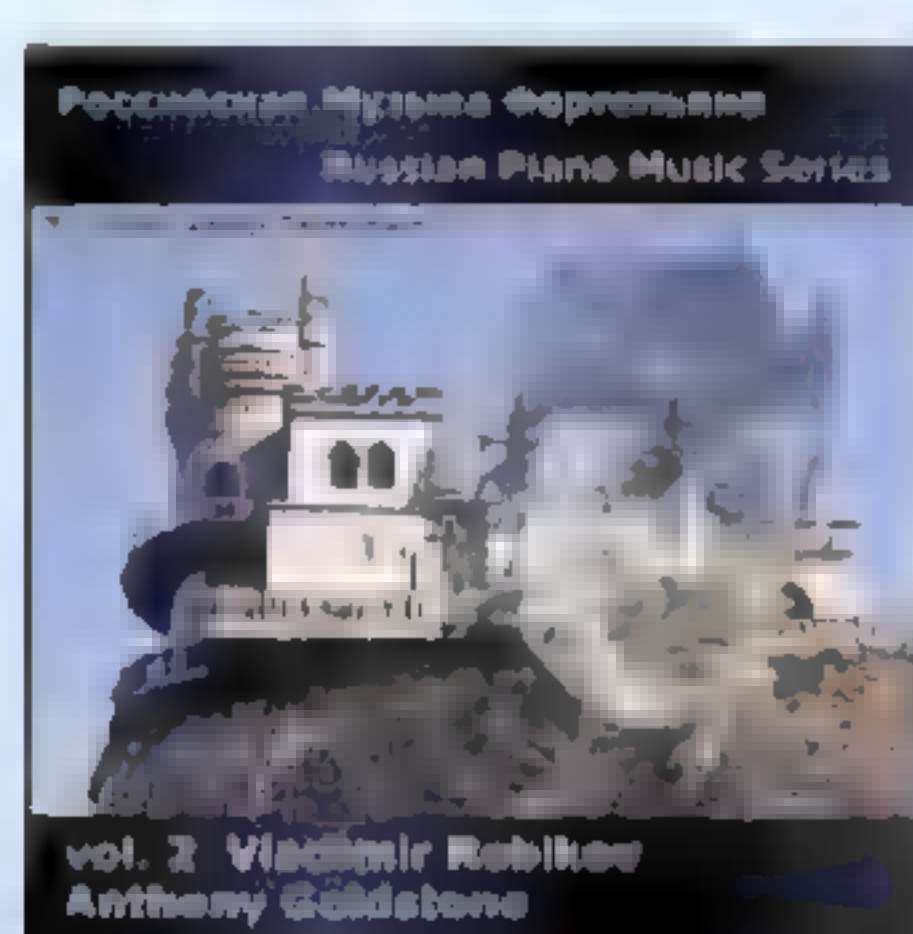
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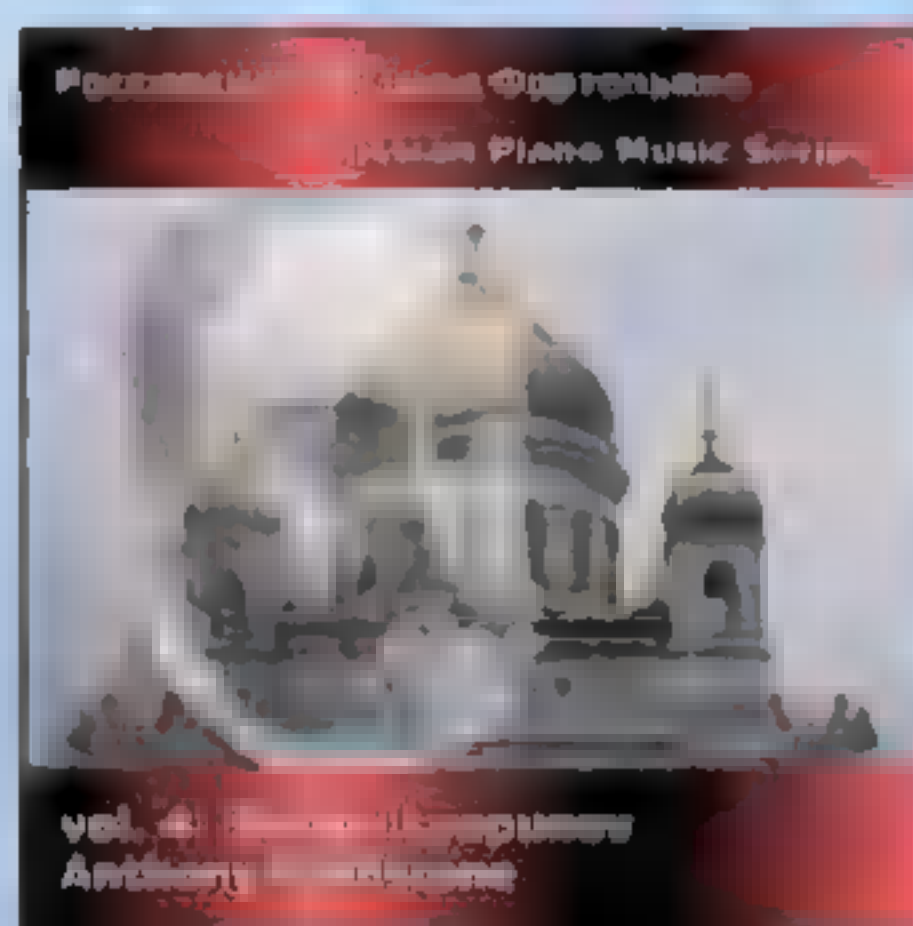
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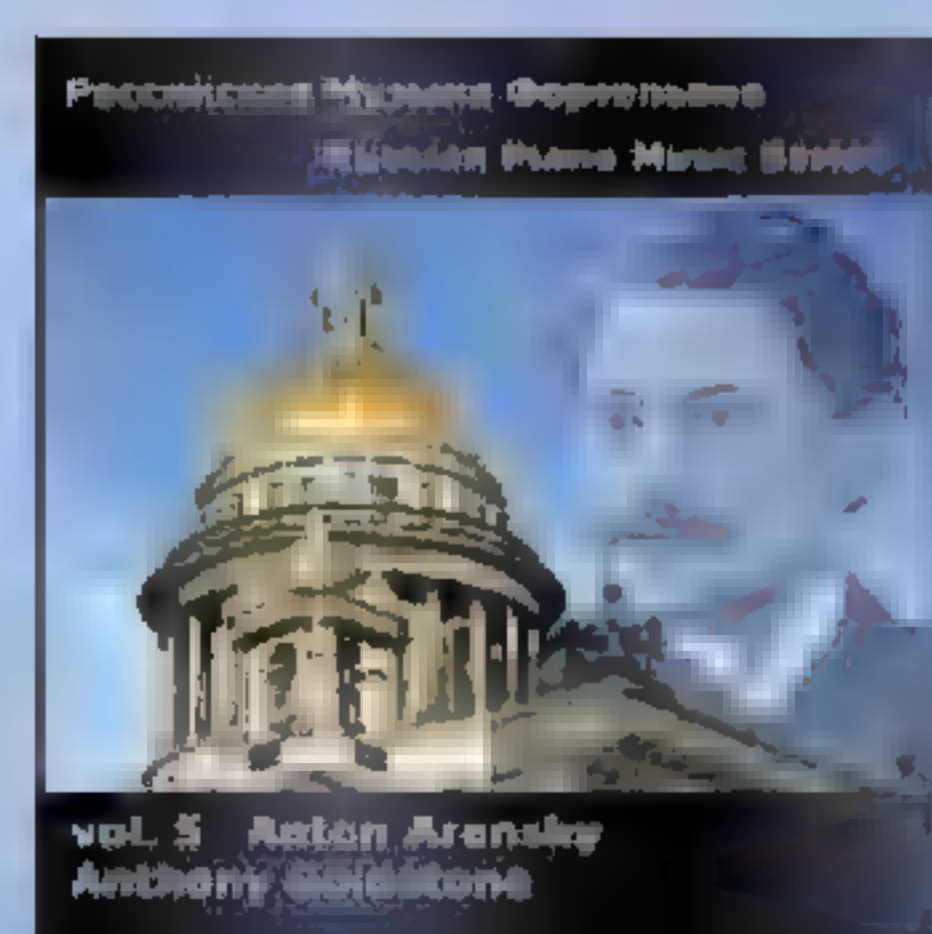
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can be. Lumsdaine's soundscapes are as concerned with inner dialogues, counterpoint and structure as anything he commits to manuscript paper. Yes, art based on birdsong or on cicadas calling stimulates different sorts of response to music written for piano or cello but either way, Lumsdaine snatches empiric sound sources from an open-ended world of possibilities...

...like how his solo cello *Blue upon Blue* (1991) plays modally inflected melodic cycles off against scattering percussive *pizzicato* figurations; or how those chirping landscapes typical of his field recordings permeate inside the precisely crafted and aphoristic *A Little Cantata* (1996), where soprano voice and recorder quiver and hum together like two crickets on heat, an approach *A tree telling of Orpheus* (1990) uses over the larger scale.

But the best is last. The 30-minute solo piano *Cambewarra* (1980) is predicated on an assumption of space and silence which Lumsdaine delicately loads with fleeting mechanisms and modal melodies weighty enough to enhance, rather than pollute, the harmony of underlying stillness. These performances, by musicians associated with the Gemini Ensemble, prove deeply sensitive to Lumsdaine's needs, with a special nod going to pianist Peter Lawson for negotiating *Cambewarra's* secret labyrinths with such clarity of mind and finger. **Philip Clark**

Moeran

'Complete Solo Folksong Arrangements'
Six Folksongs from Norfolk. The North Sea
Ground. High Germany. The Sailor and Young
Nancy. The Little Milkmaid. The Jolly Carter.
Parson and Clerk. Gaol Song. Six Suffolk
Folksongs. Songs from County Kerry
Adrian Thompson *ten* **Marcus Farnsworth** *bar*
John Talbot *pf* **Weybridge Male Voice Choir** /
Christine Best

British Music Society © BMS438CD (65' • DDD)

**Moeranites will not want to miss out
on this delightful folksong anthology**



Jack Moeran was a 19-year-old student at the Royal College when he encountered one of Vaughan Williams's *Norfolk Rhapsodies* at a Queen's Hall concert in the spring of 1914. A Norfolk lad himself, Moeran was entranced by how the music "seemed to breathe the very spirit of the English countryside", promptly purchased Cecil Sharp's *Folk Songs from Somerset* and returned home to set about collecting folksongs for himself. Either side of the Great War (in which he enlisted as a motorcycle despatch rider before being invalided out with a head wound in May 1917), Moeran managed to transcribe nearly 70 songs from such local figures as James "Old Larpin"



A rare HANDEL FEAST

Ludus Baroque breathe life into this St Cecilia celebration

Handel

Alexander's Feast, HWV75

Sophie Bevan *sop* **Edward Lyon** *ten*
William Berger *bass* **Ludus Baroque** /
Richard Neville-Towle
Delphian © ② DCD34094 (82' • DDD • T)

Selected comparison:

Sixteen, Christophers (9/05) (CORO) COR16028



Ludus Baroque is a group of singers and instrumentalists who have been meeting twice a year since 1997 to give concerts of Bach and Handel in Edinburgh. This is their first commercial recording, and it's a great success. *Alexander's Feast* is an ode to St Cecilia set by Handel in 1736 to words written by Dryden in 1697. It tells how Alexander the Great was entertained at Persepolis, after his victory over the Persians, by the court musician, Timotheus. In the second part, Alexander is roused to burn the palace down in revenge for the death of his soldiers. The tenuous connection with St Cecilia lies in Dryden's contrasting the pagan Timotheus, and his "breathing Flute, and

sounding Lyre", with "divine Cecilia", associated with the organ.

The ode is scored for strings, oboes, horns, trumpet and timpani (and recorders, of which more anon). Richard Neville-Towle gets beautifully crisp playing from his orchestra: the jolly numbers bounce along nicely but the solemn passages are given their due weight too. The middle section of "Revenge, Timotheus cries", violas and bassoons in octaves, is properly eerie. The chorus sounds young, fresh and enthusiastic. Ed Lyon gets off to a bad start by mispronouncing "Thais" (as do Sophie Bevan and the chorus, the latter also getting "deity" wrong); but he redeems himself with his ringing tone and, in "Happy pair", awe-inspiring breath control. Sophie Bevan and William Berger are equally splendid.

This is a notable achievement. In the end, though, Ludus Baroque must yield to The Sixteen: their performance is also top-notch but Harry Christophers chooses the fuller, recorder-accompanied version of "Thus, long ago", for which Handel's first thoughts are a poor substitute, and includes the two concertos, for harp and organ respectively, which are an integral part of this wonderful piece. **Richard Lawrence**



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E&OE

Sutton from Winterton, Bob "Jolt" Miller from Sutton and Harry Cox from Hickling. Arranged in 1923 and published the following year, the collection entitled *Six Folksongs from Norfolk* includes two tunes that were prove particularly fruitful: "Lonely Waters" subsequently inspired his haunting orchestral impression of the same name; and "The Shooting of his Dear" stalks the elegiac slow movement of his glorious Symphony in G minor. A second, rather less distinctive set, *Six Suffolk Folksongs*, appeared eight years later and is preceded here by a further seven settings, of which the bracing, rather Stanfordian "The North Sea Ground" (1915) only came to light as recently as 2000.

From the early 1930s Moeran divided his time between England and Ireland, eventually settling in Kenmare, County Kerry. Seven of the tunes he collected in Kenmare, Caherciveen and Sneem found a home in the enchanting and subtly crafted *Songs from County Kerry* (published in 1950, the last year of his life), in the preface to which Moeran states: "The verse-by-verse variants in some of the tunes are exactly as I heard from the singers themselves on a number of occasions." Perhaps the most fascinating aspect, though, is the shared heritage of so much of this material: trawlermen from East Anglia and Kerry regularly plied their trade in each other's fishing grounds and would certainly have performed songs together over a glass or two of ale or stout. As Moeran's fellow composer and friend Aloys Fleischmann has observed: "It is true that the folk music of these islands may at times be difficult to distinguish but the composer himself used to point out that in Norfolk he heard characteristically Irish tunes, and again, Norfolk tunes in Kerry, brought in each case by visiting fisherfolk from one country to another...[the] folk music of each county contributed its share to the texture of his music."

Baritone Marcus Farnsworth, winner of the 2009 Wigmore Hall International Song Competition, has the lion's share of duties and brings a most personable warmth, commitment and no little narrative flair to the task in hand (his enunciation, by the way, is admirable). Tenor Adrian Thompson possesses a less ingratiating timbre but there's no denying his infectious ardour and idiomatic delivery. Moreover, that indefatigable champion of the composer, John Talbot, contributes consistently understanding and stylish accompaniments. Vividly truthful sound – and a special word of praise for Roy Palmer's painstakingly researched annotation, which strikes me as a model of its kind. Full texts can be downloaded from the BMS website (www.britishmusicsociety.co.uk). A job well done! **Andrew Achenbach**

Monteverdi

Monteverdi *Vespro della Beata Vergine*

Fontana Sonata Seconda

Choir of the Enlightenment; Orchestra of the

Age of Enlightenment / Robert Howarth *hpd*

OAE Released/Signum (M) (2) SIGCD237 (97) • DDD • T/D

Recorded live at Kings Place, London, August 2010

The imposing stone of St Marks swapped for the tight, light wood of Kings Place



The 400th anniversary of Monteverdi's *Vespers* continues to make its presence felt with this new account from the

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under their keyboard player Robert Howarth, the product of a specially convened concert at Kings Place in London last August following a springtime European tour with the piece. This is essentially a "straight" performance in the sense that there is no added chant, the order of pieces is as per the original publication (though with the addition of a motet, *Exultent caeli*, and a Violin Sonata by Fontana somewhat curiously placed at the very end), and instrumental participation is restricted to what appears in Monteverdi's score, Howarth perhaps reckoning that his 22-strong choir is substantial enough.

So it is, the typically British line-up of expert consort singers providing some lusty moments and responding well to Howarth's robust attention to the meaning of the words. It also serves up some fine soloists, not least Nicholas Mulroy, a tenor already on his third *Vespers* recording and getting better with each one. But the choir's collective sound is somehow rather plain, at times even pallid. It may be that the concert-hall acoustic is a bit mean on them or possibly that the selected high pitch of A=466 is out of their vocal comfort zone (that perhaps also being the reason for some unusual shifts in tone-colour and lapses in intensity), but it is also fair to say that Howarth does not shape and blend his choral sound with the skill of a Christie or a Gardiner. He does have some nice interpretative ideas, though: the ritornellos in the opening Responsorium swing deliciously, the excellently sung *Exultent caeli* is suitably uplifting and the *Magnificat* effectively swift-paced. That this is a concert recording, however, is proved by a number of small accidents of tuning and ensemble.

Of recent *Vespers* releases, Christina Pluhar's one-to-a-part recording with L'Arpeggiata (Virgin, 5/11) is a stunning and colourful arrival on the scene; Howarth's less vivid choral version may not excite in the same way, and nor does it have the same level of finish, but it has a certain coherence and honesty of its own all the same.

Lindsay Kemp

M Romero

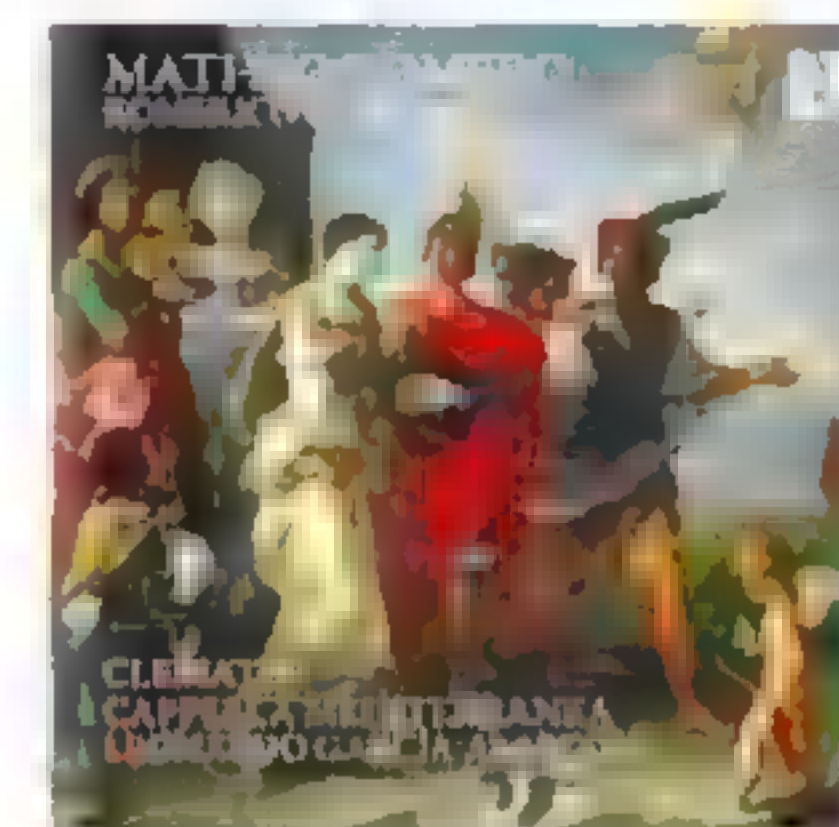
Entre dos mansos arroyos. Romerico florido.

Coraçon ¿donde estuvistes?. Hermosas y enojadas. A la dulce risa del alva, ¡Ay, qué muero de zelos!. En este invierno. Caíase de un espino. Volarás pensamiento mío. Fatigada navecilla. En una playa amena. Pescador, que das al mar

Ensemble Clematis; Capella Mediterranea / Leonardo García-Alarcón

Ricercar (F) RIC308 (61) • DDD

A revelatory rediscovery: the exuberant music of Mateo Romero



Mateo Romero (or Matthieu Rosmarin, c1575-1647) is one of those composers who has fallen through the gaps of history, rather like his contemporary Peter

Philips. Performances are rare and recordings have been sporadic, so this second disc of music by him from Ricercar is very welcome. Romero was born in Liège but left for Madrid at the age of 10 and studied with Philippe Rogier; though he thoroughly absorbed the Franco-Flemish contrapuntal agility of his master, works such as those collected here also show how completely he adopted the Spanish idiom. Leonardo García-Alarcón makes rather a point of this in his note on the music, as well as drawing attention to the continuity of this style in Latin America, where Romero's works were widely known, even to the point of noting the resemblance between the composer's *Aquella hermosa aldeana* to the anonymous Peruvian *Hanacpachap cuisicuinin*, which is undeniable.

There is, in fact, something of a Latin-American exuberance about many of the performances here, with plenty of use of vihuelas and percussion: *Romerico florido* is a particularly successful example and an excellent vehicle for the lovely voice of Mariana Flores. Whether it is exactly appropriate is one of those questions that one ought to ask but which seems ultimately irrelevant in the face of the revelation of such fine music, superbly recorded. **Ivan Moody**

S-D Sandström

'Nordic Sounds'

Lobet den Herrn. Ave Maria. Hear my prayer, O Lord. Es ist genug. A New Song of Love. Laudamus te. Agnus Dei. Singet dem Herrn

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MUSICÆTERNA & THE NEW SIBERIAN SINGERS
TEODOR CURRENTZIS

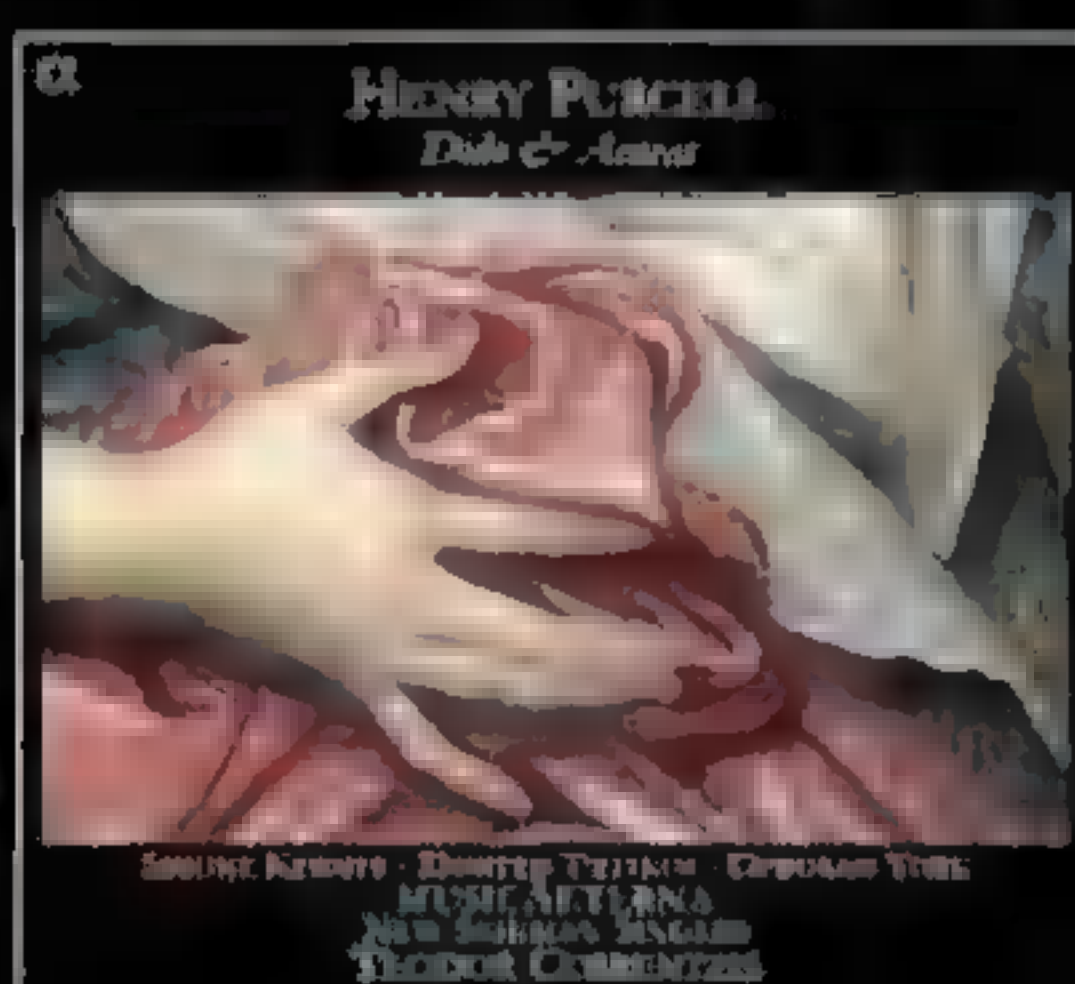
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Choral Pilgrimage

'Sumptuous' The Daily Telegraph

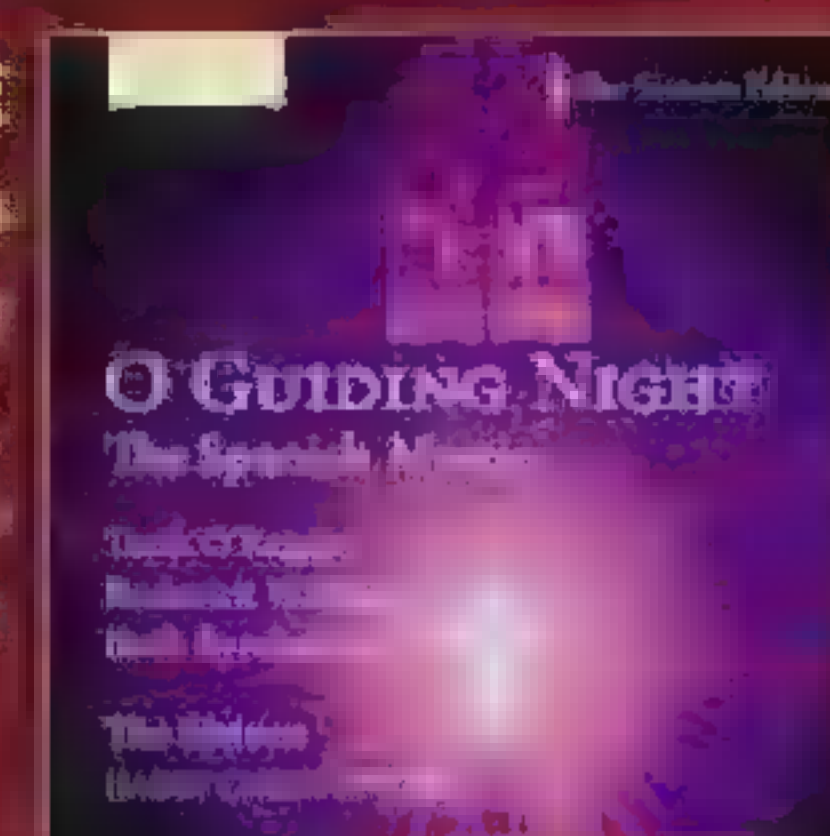
COMING SOON



Palestrina (Volume 1)

The first of a new series of discs devoted to Palestrina's
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O Guiding Night
The Spanish Mystics
New Compositions by
Dinko Popovic
Richard Williams
and David Hetherington



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Their inspiration has come from the outstanding professional choral groups which have emerged, one of the very finest being the Swedish Radio Choir, which was founded back in 1925 but only developed its particular skill in *a cappella* singing after Eric Ericson was appointed its music director in 1952. His present-day successor is the Dutchman Peter Dijkstra, who has been its chief conductor since 2007.

The disc is by way of a retrospective of Sven-David Sandström as he approaches his 70th birthday and the music ranges from the *Agnus Dei* of 1981 to *A New Song of Love*, written in 2009 for the performers who have recorded it here. While there is a very clear and distinct musical voice permeating the whole programme, Sandström has clearly upped the level of vocal expertise he demands of his choirs as the years have gone by. But these Swedish singers take it all in their stride, seeming to find no problem with his incredibly high tessituras for all voices, traditional, rich, romantic harmonies behaving in anything but a traditional way and non-musical vocalisations (such as the weird vocal tremolo in *Laudamus te*).

Possibly Sandström's most famous work, his strange but highly effective response to Purcell's unfinished anthem *Hear my prayer*, is here, and reveals the only slight weakness in these performances. Dijkstra certainly has driven his singers to a rare state of technical perfection but compared with, say, Simon Halsey's Berlin Radio Choir on their 2005 Harmonia Mundi disc, the performances come across as cold and impersonal, with Channel Classics' rather dry recording not helping matters. **Marc Rochester**

Schubert

Die schöne Müllerin, D795

Christopher Maltman bar **Graham Johnson** pf
Wigmore Hall Live (M) WHLIVE0044 (63' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live, December 8, 2010

An involving Schöne Müllerin performed
part of Maltman's Wigmore Hall series



Christopher Maltman's journeyman miller is volatile, susceptible, prone to violent swings between elation and self-communing inwardness, but not one who senses his tragic fate virtually from the outset. With its fine, bright resonance, his virile baritone initially exudes health and an eagerness to seize life. In "Wohin", the vision of water-sprites prompts a tender, confiding half-voice, while in "Der Neugierige" he questions the brook in tones of mesmeric inwardness, before erupting in an almost delirious "Ungeduld". Encouraged by Graham Johnson's luminous *cantabile*, he ensures that the three leisurely strophic songs that follow never become

over-languid and tellingly varies his tone from verse to verse.

After the ecstatic, devil-may-care abandon of "Mein" and the troubled musing of "Pause", Maltman flares into sarcastic outrage at the appearance of the huntsman. His incisive, muscular timbre here more readily suggests fist-clenched fury than underlying distress and panic – shades of emotion which tenors tend to convey more easily than baritones. But Maltman's haunted, withdrawn colouring in the final verse of "Die liebe Farbe" has already confirmed the boy's encroaching derangement; the penultimate "Der Müller und der Bach" is intensely moving in its progression from numb bleakness (created as much by Johnson's timing and colouring of Schubert's desultory chords as by Maltman's blanched tones), through consoling tenderness in the brook's major-key response, to the final dissolution.

A nit-picking reviewer might point to intermittent moments of flatness, and instances (say, in the ninth song, "Des Müllers Blumen") where Maltman stresses individual words at the expense of a liquid *legato* line. But while other singers, tenors especially (Werner Güra and Ian Bostridge to the fore), suggest a more youthfully vulnerable protagonist, Maltman's ardent, impulsive, intensely "lived" performance, partnered and inspired by the ever-illuminating Johnson, should be heard by anyone who loves the cycle. **Richard Wigmore**

Schütz

Matthäus-Passion, SWV479

Julian Podger ten Evangelist **Jacob Bloch**
Jespersen bass-bar Christus **Ars Nova**
Copenhagen / Paul Hillier
Dacapo (P) 8 226094 (55' • DDD • T/t)

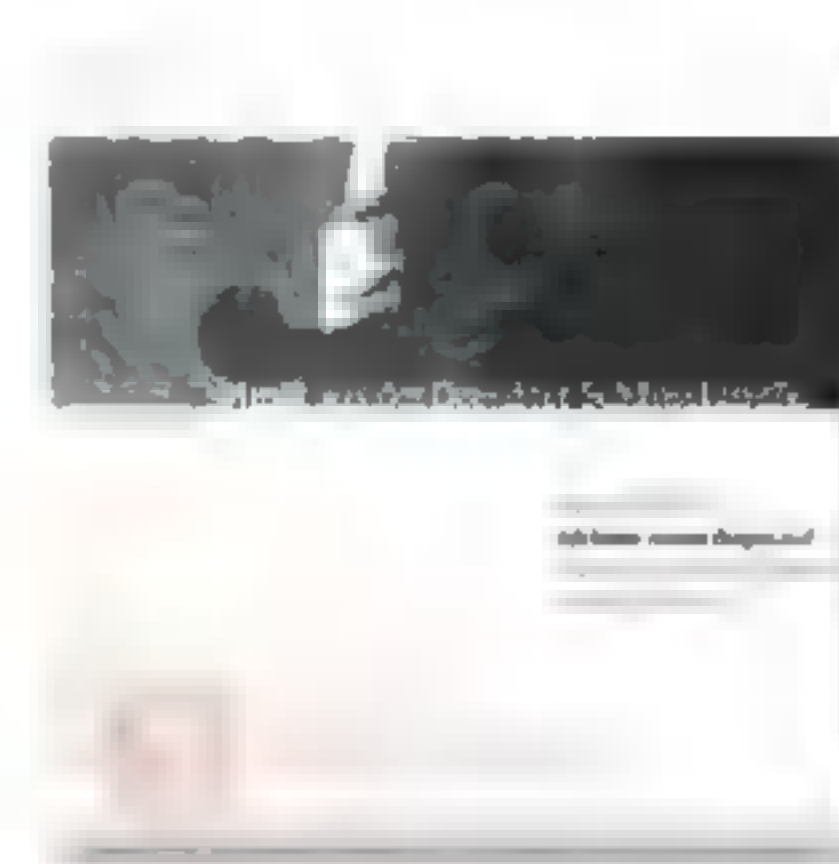
Schütz

Ich hebe meine Augen auf, SWV31. Zion spricht: der Herr hat mich verlassen, SWV46. Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr, SWV327. In lectulo per noctes, SWV272-73. Syncharma musicum, SWV49. Teutonia dudum, SWV338. Wo der Herr nicht das Haus bauet, SWV400. Veni Sancte Spiritus, SWV475. Magnificat anima mea Dominum, SWV468. Invenerunt me custodes civitatis, SWV273. **Maria Skiba, Heidi Maria Taubert, Dorothea Wagner** sop **David Erler** countertenor **Tobias Hunger, Stephan Gahler** tens **Ingolf Seidel** bar **Clemens Heidrich, Matthias Lutze** basses **Cappella Sagittariana Dresden / Norbert Schuster** Raumklang (P) RK3001 (60' • DDD)

Hillier completes his Schütz survey and the Dresdeners offer a mixed selection



In 17th-century Dresden, musical instruments were required to remain silent at the court chapel during Holy Week, so the voices in Schütz's



St Matthew Passion (c1666) are entirely unaccompanied. All of the narrative by the Evangelist and contributions from individual characters are

intoned chants, and only the introit, crowd scenes and conclusion are set in harmonic polyphony. Within such austere parameters Schütz creates a narrative that is poignant and solemn, but as a natural consequence the occasional unfolding into harmony acquires enhanced dramatic potency (the multitude shouting at Pilate to free Barabbas) or profound beauty (the soldiers acknowledging "Truly this was the Son of God"). Hillier recorded Schütz's *St Matthew Passion* with the Hilliard Ensemble for EMI many moons ago (nla) and his return to it completes Ars Nova Copenhagen's exceptional series of the Dresden Kapellmeister's narrative works. Julian Podger's Evangelist and Jacob Bloch Jespersen's Jesus are authoritative, particularly in the compellingly emotive section around Christ's "Eli, Eli, lama asabthani?". Individual step-outs ensure that chanting is dramatically engaged and the consort singing is flawless.

Plenty of essential Schütz recordings present single major works or complete publications but sometimes it is alternatively illuminating to hear a thoughtful mixed programme. After all, Schütz never envisaged that anyone would sit and listen to all of his *Psalmes Davids* (published 1619) in one go – although I would happily recommend the value of doing so! Cappella Sagittariana Dresden's nine singers and up to 23 instrumentalists present an album that explores Schütz's polychoral style: there are masterful performances of opulent works selected from the Psalms of David, an elaborate four-choir setting of *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and a striking five-choir *Magnificat*. Contextual contrast and sonorous relief are provided by the more modestly scaled *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* (from the second volume of *Kleine geistliche Konzerte*, 1639), and the spirit of Gabrieli is invoked during an affectionate account of *Invenerunt me custodes civitatis* (from the first book of *Symphoniae sacrae* published at Venice in 1629). Norbert Schuster's articulate performances move seamlessly between gentle fluency and shapely grandeur, while playing and singing is always delightfully supple. **David Vickers**

R Strauss

Don Juan, Op 20^a. Metamorphosen^a. Acht Lieder aus Letzte Blätter, Op 10^b – No 4, Die Georgine; No 6, Die Verschwiegen; No 7, Die Zeitlose; No 8, Allerseelen. Begegnung, AV72^b. Die erwachte Rose, AV66^b. Morgen!, Op 27 No 4^b. Rote Rosen, AV76^b

OPERAS

Faust <i>piece in concert version</i> by Charles Gounod	October 7, 10, 11, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25 and 28, 2011 Edward Gardner / Pierre Vallet Krassimira Stoyanova / Ermonela Jaho, Piotr Beczala / Fernando Portari, Erwin Schrott / Michele Pertrusi, Ludovic Tézier / Marc Barrard, Karine Deshayes / Ketevan Kemoklidze.
Jo, Dalí by Xavier Benguerel	October 19, 21 and 23, 2011 Miquel Ortega · Xavier Albertí · Joaquim Roy · Maria Araujo Joan Martín-Royo, Marisa Martins, Antoni Comas, Fernando Latorre, Hasmik Nahapetyan, Àlex Sanmartí.
Le Grand Macabre by György Ligeti	November 19, 22, 25 and 28, 2011. December 1, 2011 Michael Boder · Àlex Ollé (La Fura dels Baus) / Valentina Carrasco · Àlfons Flores · Lluç Castells · Peter van Praet Werner van Mechelen, Chris Merritt, Frode Olsen, Barbara Hannigan, Ning Liang, Brian Asawa, Martin Winkler, Ana Puche, Inés Moraleda, Francisco Vas.
Linda di Chamounix by Gaetano Donizetti	December 20, 23, 27, 28 and 30, 2011 January 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8, 2012 Marco Armiliato · Emilio Sagi · Daniel Bianco · Pepa Aranguren · Albert Faura Diana Damrau / Mariola Cantarero, Juan Diego Flórez / Ismael Jordi, Silvia Tro Santafé / Ketevan Kemoklidze, Pietro Spagnoli / Fabio Capitanucci, Bruno de Simone / Paolo Bordogna, Simon Orfila / Mirco Palazzi.
Il burbero di buon cuore by Vicent Martín i Soler	January 27, 28 and 31, 2012. February 2, 4 and 6, 2012 Jordi Savall · Irina Brook · Noëlle Ginéfrí · Sylvie Martin-Hyszka · Vinicio Cheli Elena de la Merced, Veronique Gens, Patricia Bardon, David Alegret, Paolo Fanale, Marco Vinco, Carlos Chausson, Josep Miquel Ramon.
Le nozze di Figaro by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	January 28 and 30, 2012. February 1 and 3, 2012 Christophe Rousset · Lluís Pasqual · Paco Azorín · Franca Squarciarino · Albert Faura Maite Alberola, Ainhoa Garmendia, Borja Quiza, Joan Martín-Royo, Maite Beaumont, Marie McLaughlin, Roger Padullés, Vicenç Esteve Madrid, Naroa Intxauski, Valeriano Lanchas.
La Bohème by Giacomo Puccini	February 27, 28 and 29, 2012 March 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18 and 19, 2012 Victor Pablo Pérez · Giancarlo del Monaco · Michael Scott · Ulrich Niepel Fiorenza Cedolins / Inva Mula / Angela Gheorghiu / Maria Luigia Borsi, Ainhoa Arteta / Ainhoa Garmendia / Eliana Bayon, Ramón Vargas / Roberto Aronica / Saimir Pirgu / Teodor Ilincai, Christopher Maltman / Georges Petean / Àngel Odena, Manel Esteve Madrid.
Eine florentinische Tragödie · Der Zwerg by Alexander von Zemlinsky	April 4, 10, 13, 16, 19 and 22, 2012 Marc Albrecht · Andreas Homoki · Wolfgang Gussmann · Franck Evin Marie Arnet, Isabel Bayrakdarian, Natascha Petrinsky, Klaus Florian Vogt, Cosmin Irim, Greer Grimsley.
Die Zauberflöte by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	April 24, 26 and 28, 2012 Pablo González · Joan Font (Comediants) · Joan Guillén · Albert Faura Susanna Philips, Albina Shagimuratova, Pavol Breslik, Joan Martín-Royo, Georg Zeppenfeld, Vicenç Esteve Madrid, Ruth Rosique, Inés Moraleda, Mikhaïl Vekua, Kurt Gysen.
Adriana Lecouvreur by Francesco Cilea	May 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 30, 2012 June 3, 2012 Maurizio Benini · David McVicar · Charles Edwards · Brigitte Reiffenstuel · Adam Silverman Barbara Frittoli / Daniela Dessi / Micaela Carosi, Dolora Zajick / Marianne Cornetti / Elisabetta Fiorillo, Roberto Alagna / Fabio Armiliatto / Carlo Ventre, Joan Pons / Bruno de Simone.
El gato con botas by Xavier Montsalvatge	May 19, 20, 26 and 27, 2012 Antoni Ros-Marbà · Emilio Sagi · Agatha Ruiz de la Prada · José Luis Canales Marisa Martins, María Luz Martínez.
Pelléas et Mélisande by Claude Debussy	June 27 and 29, 2012. July 1, 3, 5 and 7, 2012 Michael Boder · Robert Wilson · Frida Parmeggiani · Heinrich Brunke Yann Beuron, María Bayo, Laurent Naouri, Naomi Summers, John Tomlinson, Ruth Rosique, Kurt Gysen.
Aida by Giuseppe Verdi	July 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28 and 30, 2012 Renato Palumbo · José Antonio Gutierrez · Josep Mestres Cabanes · Franca Squarciarino · Albert Faura. Sandra Radvanovsky / Barbara Havemann, Luciana D'Intino / Ildiko Komlosi, Marcello Giordani, Zeljko Lucic / Joan Pons, Vitaly Kowaljev / Giacomo Prestia.

Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of the Gran Teatre del Liceu

DANCE

Mariinsky Ballet
Le Corsaire
November 21, 23, 24, 26 and 27, 2011
IT Dansa
Sechs Tänze · Minus 16
January 21, 22, 28 and 29, 2012
Corella Ballet Castilla y León
Swan Lake
February 9, 10, 11 and 12, 2012
Grupo Corpo
Bach · Parabelo
May 31, 2012. June 1 and 2, 2012
Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo
Faust
June 7, 8 and 9, 2012

RECITALS

Juan Diego Flórez
December 3, 2011
Recital René Pape
February 5, 2012
Recital Nina Stemme
July 4, 2012

CONCERTS

Szenen auf Goethe's Faust
October 27 and 29, 2011
Concert Jaroussky
December 2, 2011
Montserrat Caballé:
15 years at the Liceu
January 3, 2012
«Francesc Viñas» Contest
January 20 and 22, 2012
The other Pelléas
On the occasion of
«Pelléas et Mélisande»
July 6 and 8, 2012

EL PETIT LICEU (Children's programme)

Petruxka with IT Dansa
La Ventafocs
La primera cançó
IT Dansa
Allegro Vivace
Gulliem Tell
Els músics · Bremen
El Superbarber de Sevilla
La petita Flauta Màgica
L'orquestra dels animals
El gato con botas



^bJoan Rodgers *sop* ^aStrasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra / Jan Latham-Koenig *bp*

Avie ⑤ AV2172 (63' • DDD • T/I)

Jan Latham-Koenig as a sensitive piano and orchestral accompanist



These were Jan Latham-Koenig's valedictory 2001 recordings with the Strasbourg Philharmonic and as pianist in partnership with Joan Rodgers in

London's Henry Wood Hall in 2008. The account of *Don Juan* cannot be faulted: ideally paced, with a bold contribution from the horns and strings which are virile and rich. The tension in *Metamorphosen*, although not low, is a little inconsistent but reaches an impressively passionate climax with good, full-bodied recording. The conductor also provides highly sympathetic accompaniments for his soloist, Joan Rodgers. She has chosen some of Strauss's most appealing songs and her simple style suits the miscellaneous Lieder, particularly the two settings inspired by roses and the familiar "Morgen!". In some of the Op 10 Lieder her voice tends to peak on *fortissimos* but, overall, this is an enjoyable selection. **Ivan March**

W Todd

Te Deum^a. The Burning Road^b

^aBethany Halliday, ^bJennifer Maybee *sops* ^bGraeme Danby *bar* ^aVivace Chorus; ^aYouth Choirs of Holy Trinity School, Holy Trinity and St Mary's Church and Tormead School, Guildford; ^bCrouch End Festival Chorus; ^aWill Todd Ensemble / Jeremy Backhouse; ^bNational Sinfonia / David Temple

Tyalgum Press ⑤ TYA004 (70' • DDD)

Jazz-tinged choral works performed with conviction



Large-scale choral works that convey a message have had a resurgence over recent years. Rendering sacred texts from a present-day perspective is far from

easy, though Will Todd did just so with *Mass in Blue* (Signum, A/06) and similarly his *Te Deum* (2009). Yet the combining of adult and youth choirs, along with a jazz trio and an ensemble of brass and saxes, never achieves the intended synthesis; nor does the interplay of rhythmic incisiveness with an effortful lyricism – least of all in the final section, where the close of the *Te Deum* and lines from Psalm 23 tend to get in each other's way. It hardly helps that the recording, made in four separate locations, sets voices at an audible remove from instruments.

The Burning Road (1997) is more successful. Marking the 60th anniversary of the Jarrow Crusade, this setting of Ben Dunwell's impassioned verse evokes an event in which

those who took part returned with a renewed sense of their human worth. Although it contains eloquent and ably-taken solo writing, this is primarily a choral work and the Crouch End Festival Chorus evince a conviction as evident here as in Roberto Gerhard or Ray Davies, while David Temple secures a dynamic response from the National Sinfonia. Has this recording really lain in the vaults for 13 years? If so, its appearance now ought to win this piece the audience it deserves.

Richard Whitehouse

Villa-Lobos

Villa-Lobos *As Costureiras. Ave Maria* (1918).

Bachianas brasileiras No 9. *Bazzum*. *Bendita sabedoria*. *Chôros* No 3, 'Pica-Páu'. *Cor dulce, cor amabile*. *José. Na Bahia Tem. Prêces sem palavras* **Villa-Lobos/Bach** *Prelude and Fugue* No 8, BWV853

SWR Vocal Ensemble Stuttgart / Marcus Creed Hänssler Classic ⑤ CD93 268 (62' • DDD)

Bendita Sabedoria, Cor dulce, cor amabile – selected comparison:

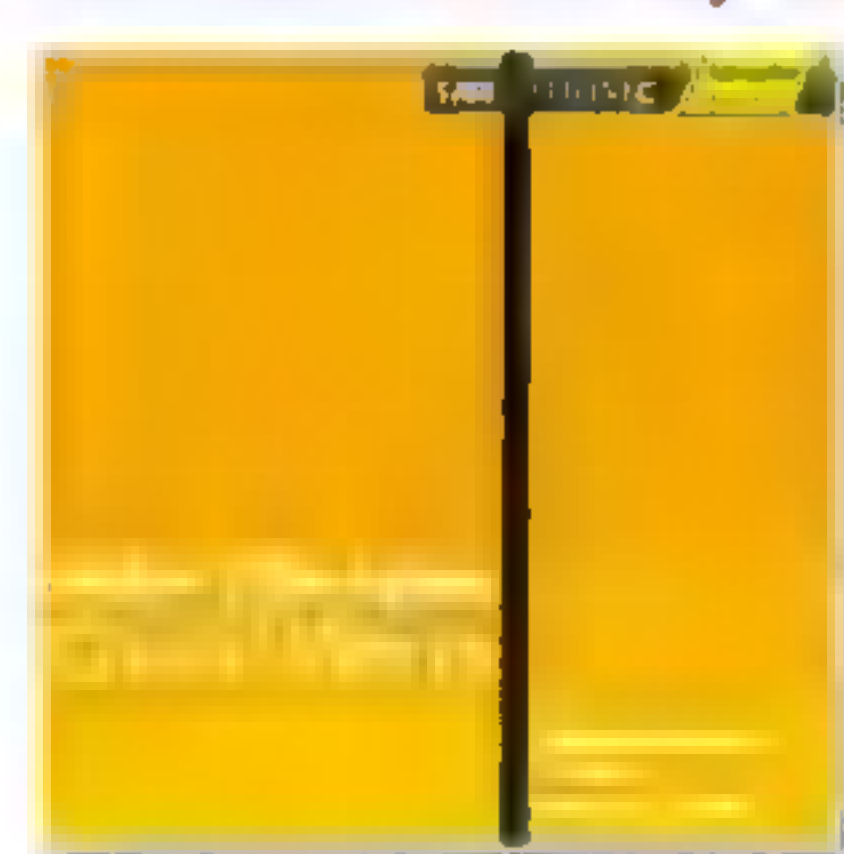
Corydon Sgrs, Best (8/93) (HYPE) CDA66638

Bachianas brasileiras No 9 – selected comparisons:

São Paulo Sym Ch, Minczuk (2/07) (BIS) BIS-CD1400

BBC Singers, de la Martinez (LORE) LNT102

An entertaining and varied clutch of choral works by the Brazilian master



Villa-Lobos's vocal music remains probably the least-known area of his compositional output, the celebrated vocal Fifth and choral Ninth of the *Bachianas*

aside. The vocal works range from song-cycles to operas, part-songs to cantatas. This selection of Villa-Lobos's *a cappella* choral works was preceded eight years ago by a revelatory disc from the Corydon Singers.

The late six-part choral cycle *Bendita sabedoria* (1958) is the largest although not weightiest item on Hänssler's new disc and allows a meaningful comparison with the Corydon Singers. The British group have the plusher sound but the SWR chorus's performance reveals equally polished vocal dexterity and slightly cleaner textures in the opening motet, *Cor dulce, cor amabile* (1952). *Bachianas* No 9 (1945) fares very well, too, although they do not surpass the São Paulo Choir or the BBC Singers in the more sedate account under Odaline de la Martinez.

The pick of the remaining items is the arrangement of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue*, BWV853, sturdy music, sturdily recast and rendered. There are widely differing characters elsewhere, from the charming *José* (1944) and quirky *Bazzum* (1936) to the early *Ave Maria* and the third of the *Chôros* series, subtitled *Pica-Páu* ("Woodpecker"; 1925). Hänssler's recording is clean and clear, and beautifully balanced. Recommended.

Guy Rickards



Ludwig van Beethoven
Complete Symphonies
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Paul Kletzki



Kogan / Barshai / Rostropovich
Beethoven String Trios



Tiburtina Ensemble
Flox Inter Spinas

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Pumeza Matshikiza in *Wello* at Wexford Festival Opera's
110 production of *Udala* by Sinqoana
PHOTO © CLIVE BARRETT/ARTIST



Zelenka

Officium defunctorum, ZWV47.

Requiem, ZWV46

Hana Blažíková *sop* Markéta Cukrová *contr*

Sébastien Monti *ten* Tomáš Král, Marián Krejčík

basses Collegium Vocale 1704; Collegium 1704 /

Václav Luks

Accent ② ACC24244 (101' • DDD • T/I)

Zelenka's Requiem is revealed as a colourful and dramatic masterpiece



This presents all of the magnificent music by Jan Dismas Zelenka for the prolonged funeral exequies of Augustus the Strong that took place at the Dresden court's

Roman Catholic chapel from April 15, 1733, for four entire days. Václav Luks directs the *Officium defunctorum* with ample dramatic energy; Collegium 1704's players and choir perform with lyricism and precision. The extraordinary invitatory sequence has some astonishing dramatic gestures in its orchestral ritornellos, and alto Markéta Cukrová and the excellent choir interleave fluently. This and the first three lessons have already been recorded superbly by the King's Consort (Hyperion, 9/03) but, notwithstanding the plangent quality and beguiling soloists of Robert King's selections, Luks presents a reconstructed edition of the entire work including all nine lessons and also all of the responses (including some Gregorian chant), featuring idiosyncratic switches between archaic and modern styles.

Zelenka's lavish D major Requiem written for the 1733 exequies has attractive characteristics of music created for the Dresden Hofkapelle during this period, such as a finely crafted juxtaposition of expressive writing for solo voices and contrapuntal choral splendour, and striking instrumental colours (pairs of trumpets, horns, flutes, oboes, bassoons and a chalumeau are all used to telling effect). Collegium 1704's horns, trumpets and flutes create charming textures in the opening and closing parts of the celebratory *Kyrie*, which flank Hana Blažíková's graceful singing in "Christe eleison". Zelenka's dramatic word-painting during the *Sequentia* is brilliantly conveyed: tremulous strings in "Quantus tremor" followed seconds later by regal trumpets in "Tuba mirum"; "Recordare" is a softly plangent duet in which Markéta Cukrová and Sébastien Monti are accompanied poetically by Christian Leitherer's chalumeau obbligato; "Lacrimosa" is a mournful yet consoling choral fugue. Collegium 1704 proceeds to realise particularly special sonorities in "Domine, Jesu Christe": a pair of bassoons illustrate the fall into darkness, whereas the holy light that follows is accompanied by a pair of flutes. A fabulous masterpiece is unveiled. **David Vickers**

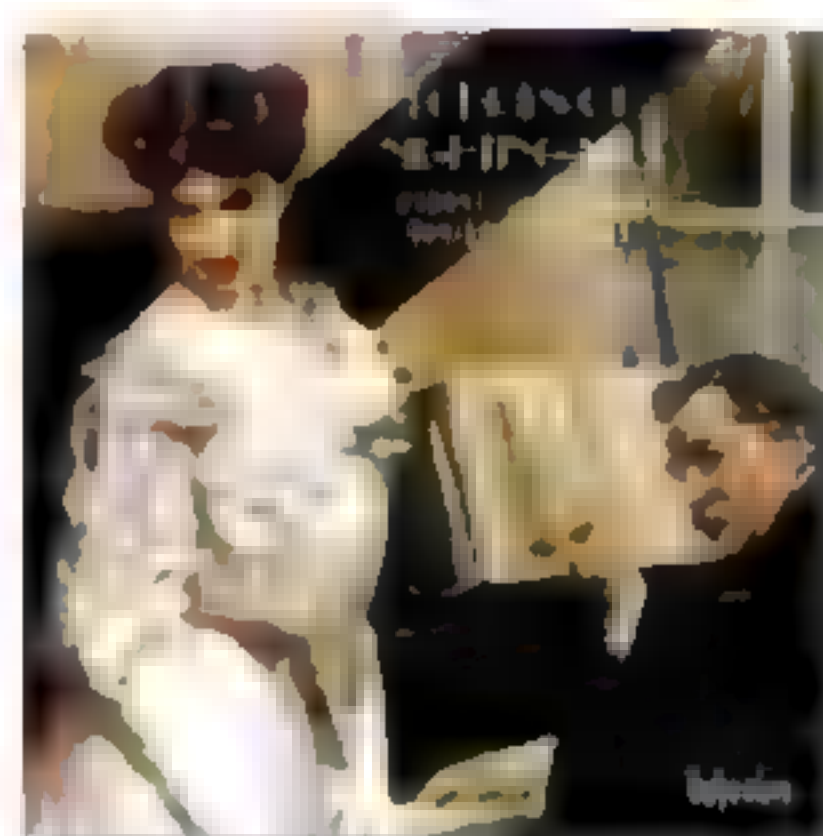


'Echoes of Nightingales'

Arlen Happiness is a thing called Joe **Bernstein** On the Town – Some other time **Bridge** Love went a-riding **Carpenter** The sleep that flits on baby's eyes **Charles** When I have sung my songs **Dougherty** Review **Firestone** In my garden. If I could tell you **Flotow** The last rose of summer **Homer** Sing to me, sing, Op 28 **Kramer** Now like a lantern, Op 44 No 5 **La Forge** Hills **La Montaine** Stopping by woods on a snowy evening **McArthur** Night **Nordoff** There shall be more joy **Rogers** At Parting **Romberg** Maytime – Will you remember? (Sweetheart) **Ronald** O lovely night! **Sargent** Hickory Hill **Tyson** Sea Moods **Vicars** 'Moya' The song of songs **Youmans** Through the years

Christine Brewer *sop* Roger Vignoles *pf*
Hyperion ② CDA67813 (66' • DDD • T)

A recital as unusual and varied as it is charming and deftly executed



"At best, encore-time turns a recital into a party," comments the late John Steane in his evocative booklet-note. As in the second half of their Wigmore Hall

recital in January, Christine Brewer and Roger Vignoles here throw an extended party with a string of encores beloved of four revered divas: the Americans Eileen Farrell, Helen Traubel and Eleanor Steber, and – surprisingly to those who cannot envisage her shorn of Wagnerian spear and helmet – the Norwegian Kirsten Flagstad. These mostly American songs are effortlessly melodious, awash with nostalgic sentiment, unafraid of schmaltz, and artfully fashioned towards a climax flaunting a soprano's "money notes". Some numbers suggest Puccini in the parlour, others come straight out of Broadway; there's folksy charm here, a tangy whiff of the blues there.

Brewer hosts her party with flair, unselfconscious enjoyment and unerring style. Never do we sense the opera singer trying to appropriate an alien domain. No other Wagner-Strauss soprano today could catch the bluesy languor of the Arlen song so naturally, the rhythms subtly swung, speech and song in perfect balance. In another gem, Bernstein's "Some other time", what Steane terms the "sighed, slightly Noël Cowardish 'Oh well's'" are deliciously inflected. Elsewhere Brewer excels in simple, intimate tenderness but can also command soaring refulgence of tone. Frank Bridge's "Love went a-riding" receives a torrential, no-holds-barred performance such as I have never heard equalled. At the other end of the spectrum, she judges perfectly the recital's comic send-off: Celius Dougherty's "Review", which satirises both critic (in pompous prose) and singer, one Miss Sadabelle Smith.

Gleefully abetted by Vignoles, Brewer enters into the fun – aping Miss Smith's nervousness, her thin, nasal tone, and so on – without ever over-egging the pudding. It ends in a muffled near-monotone: "Max Schmidt was the sympathetic accompanist". Such cursory comment is the lot of pianists. Roger Vignoles is indeed unfailingly sympathetic, but so much more: an animator and colourist whose rhythmic energy and legerdemain contribute crucially to the success of the whole delightful, offbeat recital.

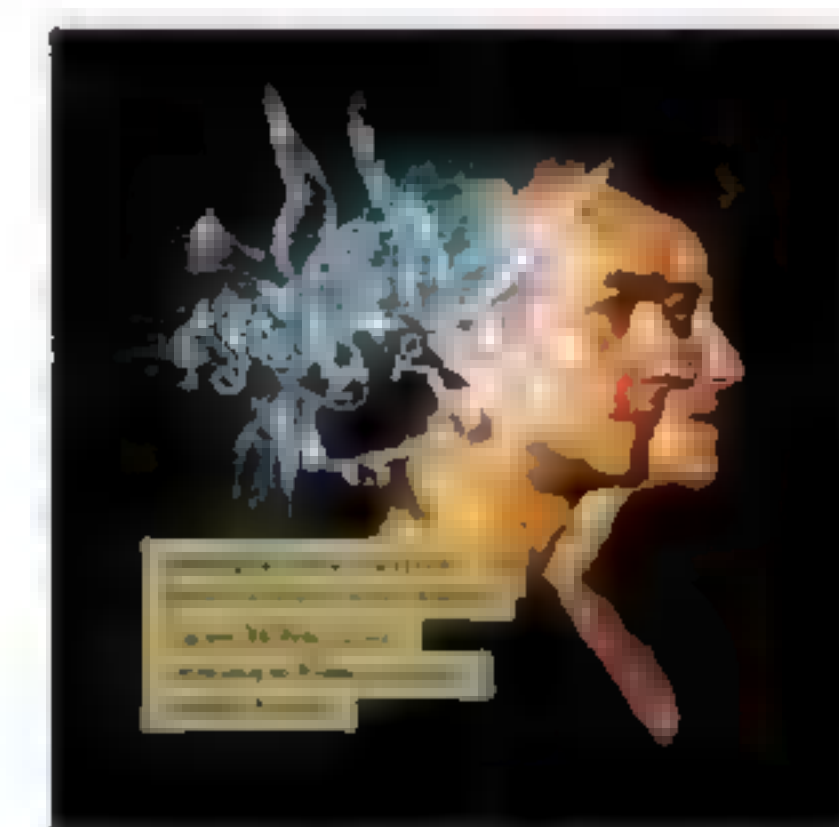
Richard Wigmore

'Parole e querele d'amore'

Monteverdi Madrigals, Book 7 – Interrotte speranze; S'el vostro cor, Madonna; Non vedrò mai le stele; Vorrei baciarti **Merula** Su la cetra amorosa **Strozzi** L'Eraclito amoroso^a **Rognoni** Anchor che col partire **Sances** Usurpator, tiranno della tua libertà^b. Lagrimosa belta **Gagliano** Cantai un tempo **Carissimi** Partenza dalla sua Donna ^a**Agnès Mellon** *sop* ^b**Dominique Visse** *counterten* **Ensemble Barcarole** (Marianne Muller *va da gamba* Marco Horvat *lirone* Eric Bellocq *theo* Brice Saily *org/bpd*) / **Agnès Mellon**

Zig-Zag Territoires ② ZZT101001 (62' • DDD)

A fascinating and canny selection of works – but a missed opportunity?



This well-structured recital showcases the differing shared states arising from love. Often consecutive pieces seem to belong together although they are

separate, as happens from the start with Monteverdi's *Interrotte speranze* and Merula's *Su la cetra amorosa* (as one might expect, the pieces by Monteverdi are the best known). Similarly, the voices of Visse and Mellon are most often coupled, though there's usually at least a hint of tension between the two, whether by virtue of the subject matter or otherwise. That's partly intentional; but sometimes the voices aspire to such an affective charge that the tone becomes forced and the tuning goes awry. This will seem appropriately daring to some but others may find it uncomfortable, especially since the general approach to tempo is rather stable (not to say staid, and too uniformly slow or fast) when the music does not positively dictate otherwise. The continuo ensemble sounds a touch constrained in this respect, as though a racing engine were confined to low gear.

For the instruments to be given their head, as in Rognoni's diminutions on the famous *Ancor che col partire*, is something of a relief. Things are not entirely helped by the sound recording, which also sounds strangely veiled or muted. That these are experienced and distinguished artists is certainly reflected in the deftness of the programming; but paradoxically, tighter artistic control might have encouraged a greater degree of abandon. **Fabrice Fitch**

Opera

Haitink live in Holland • A duo of Handel pasticcios • Rautavaara's first opera

Berlioz

La damnation de Faust

Charlotte Margiono *mez* Marguerite

Vinson Cole *ten* Faust

Thomas Quasthoff *bar* Méphistophélès

Jaco Huijpen *bass* Brander

Netherlands Radio Choir; Netherlands Radio

Philharmonic Orchestra / Bernard Haitink

Challenge Classics © ② CC72517 (142' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam,

June 29 & 30, 1999

A special concert recording in which the singers' enthusiasm is infectious



Back in 1999 the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam invited Bernard Haitink to give a carte blanche series of concerts involving five leading guest ensembles

in addition to themselves and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic (the orchestra with which Haitink began his career as a violinist and trainee conductor). The performances were especially admired for the freedom and spontaneity that the conductor brought to Romantic vocal repertoire (like this *Faust* and the Covent Garden production of *Die Walküre*), which he had sometimes approached with caution in the more distracting world of the opera house.

The opera/cantata/symphony-with-voices mix of Berlioz's finally achieved crack at the Faust legend has lured concerts and recordings from a range of not especially Berliozian conductors, among them Furtwängler and Solti. Haitink's increasingly dramatic reading of the score comfortably outstrips these. Concern that his rather classical *Marche hongroise* is eschewing the danger and violence implicit in Berlioz's wind and brass scoring is soon allayed by his pulse and pace in the big choral ensembles (Martin Wright's Netherlands Radio Choir tight and well prepared), the chamber-like delicacy of the sylph music and his evident emotional commitment to the perils of Faust's predicament.

Before continuing to praise, a word of caution. If the idea of a non-Francophone cast delivering carefully studied but occasionally eccentric French is your idea of purgatory, stop reading now. But the vocal pointing of Quasthoff's devil, the loves and

sorrows of young Margiono's Marguerite and Cole's Faust (definitely lyrical rather than the Frenchified Heldentenor attempted by some rivals), not to mention the enthusiasm of Wright's choir, override any potential unease.

The sound is clear, if lacking the Concertgebouw hall's trademark bloom. Memories of rivals on disc – especially Barenboim's spiky Paris recording (DG, 9/79^R) with Fischer-Dieskau's nonpareil Méphistophélès and either of the Sir Colin Davis sets (Philips, 1/87, and LSO Live, 7/01) – are not eclipsed, but the enthusiasm of the participants here is infectious. May we hope for the *Walküre* as a supplement to Haitink's early Wagner recordings?

Mike Ashman

Handel • Manzano

Handel Alessandro Severo, HWV A13

Mary-Ellen Nesi *mez* Alessandro

Marita Solberg *sop* Salustia

Kristina Hammarström *mez* Giulia

Irini Karaïanni *sop* Albina

Gemma Bertagnolli *sop* Claudio

Petros Magoulas *bass* Marziano

Manzano Don Crepuscolo

Christophoros Stamboglīs *bass*.... Don Crepuscolo

Armonia Atenea / George Petrou

Dabringhaus und Grimm © ③ MDG609 1674-2

(3h 47' • DDD • T/t)

A pasticcio premiere adds a 'new' Handel opera to the canon



Here is a conundrum: we have the world-premiere recording of an opera, almost every number of which has been recorded before.

Handel's *Alessandro Severo* is a pasticcio – a term derived from Italian pastry-making, in which leftovers are rolled together into a new pie. Pushed to find a third opera for the 1738 London season, Handel lighted upon a libretto of murderous treachery in imperial Rome, originally written by Apostolo Zeno. Drawing exclusively on his own earlier music, he chose for it 19 numbers from the previous season's operas – *Arminio*, *Giustino* and *Berenice* – and the rest from operas across a wide period from 1720 to 1736. The result may not be a masterpiece – for a start, it lacks a character of striking power and individuality such as an Alcina or a Giulio

Cesare. What it does do is afford a good way of getting to know some worthwhile music in a different context.

Following on from highly praised recordings of another pasticcio, *Oreste*, and four more popular works, MDG's Handel opera series takes another confident step forwards. Conductor George Petrou gives us more vigorous Handel, played by his Greek colleagues in the period-instrument Armonia Atenea with red-blooded energy and pounding rhythms. Soprano Marita Solberg sings with disarming beauty as the ostensibly innocent Salustia and Kristina Hammarström brings fiery determination to her mezzo nemesis, the wicked mother-in-law Giulia. In the castrato role of Alessandro Severo, the impressionable young emperor, Mary-Ellen Nesi manages to set a tone distinct from the rest of a well-chosen cast, none of whom lets the side down. The drawbacks are minor – the continuo in the recitatives is rather hyperactive and some of the vocal cadenzas are questionable in style – and so there is no reason not to welcome this first *Alessandro Severo* to the Handel canon.

As a bonus, the third disc contains another first recording in *Don Crepuscolo* by the early-19th-century Greek composer Niccolò Manzano. At 30 minutes, it is a sort of Rossini one-man comic opera for bass solo, here the jocular Christophoros Stamboglīs – an odd makeweight for Handel but not unpleasing. Richard Fairman

Handel

Oreste

Cornelia Lanz *mez* Oreste

Nastasja Docalu *sop* Ermione

Sabine Winter *sop* Ifigenia

Armin Stein *countertenor* Filotea

Christian Wilms *ten* Pilade

Kai Preussker *bar* Toante

Besigheim Festival Ensemble / Tobias Horn

Animato © ② ACD6123 (157' • DDD • T/t)

An impressive rescue-act for another forgotten piece of pasticcio craft



All credit to the festival in Besigheim in Germany for unearthing in 2009 a totally unknown opera by Handel and assembling a team of young singers that it would be hard to match for freshness and firmness, even among singers with starrier names. *Oreste*, with a

libretto by Giovanni Gualberto Barlocchi, is a pasticcio opera that Handel assembled in December 1734, drawing some two dozen arias from various works of his own. It received only three performances in 1734, a failure which may be accounted for by the foundation of a rival opera company and by the fact that Gay's *Beggar's Opera* was making the fickle London public fall out of love with serious Italian opera anyway.

The wonder is how many delights the work contains, though the Animato note-writer does not attempt to identify the sources from which the various arias are drawn. The recitatives which serve to tell the plot – based on the Greek myth of Iphigenia in Tauris – were neatly tailored by Handel himself and have been arranged here so that the three acts are fitted on two very well-filled discs. Each act ends with brief ballet numbers, delightfully played here not least by the ensemble's fat-toned oboist. There is also one duet for Oreste and Ermione near the end of Act 2 and several choruses designed for the soloists to sing as an ensemble.

Conductor Tobias Horn is no doubt responsible for the freshness of the playing, which fully matches the clarity and fine focus of all the singing. Mezzo Cornelia Lanz is outstanding in the title-role, with sopranos Nastasja Docalu as Ermione and Sabine Winter as Ifigenia. The countertenor of Armin Stein as Filotete provides a nice contrast with the female singers. There is little attempt at characterisation but the purely musical values are what matter most and those could hardly be more impressive. The recording, made in Besigheim church, is ideally atmospheric and not at all over-reverberant.

Edward Greenfield

Rautavaara

Kaivos (The Mine)

Hannu Niemelä *bar*.....Simon
Johanna Rusanen-Kartano *sop*..... Ira
Jorma Hynninen *bar*..... Commissar
Jaakko Kortekangas *bar*..... Priest
Mati Turi *ten*..... Marko
Petri Pussil *bass*..... Vanha
Tuomas Katajala *ten*..... A Miner
Kaivos Chorus; Tampere Philharmonic
Orchestra / Hannu Lintu

Ondine © ODE1174-2 (76' • DDD • S/T/U)

Rautavaara's first opera receives its first performances almost 50 years on



Completed in 1962 but composed largely between 1957 and 1960, *The Mine* is Rautavaara's own story of miners striking against and eventually being crushed by a dictatorial party, the latter represented onstage by the highly ambivalent figure of a Commissar, who is

hated by the workers he sincerely professes to love. Several of the central characters face dire existential choices (the composer was heavily into Sartre at the time), which makes for some productive tensions and intriguing intellectual perspectives, but not necessarily for great opera, and it is hard to imagine many listeners going along with the composer's assessment of his work as "a real thriller". What does give the story edge is its obvious and acknowledged allegory for the 1956 Hungarian uprising. This and the general context of Soviet Finlandisation made staging too hazardous to contemplate at the time. *The Mine* was first produced for television in 1963 and has still not been seen in the opera house; this new recording was taken from concert performances in Tampere last September.

Just as events in Hungary engendered the story, so Rautavaara's encounter with Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* at its Zürich world premiere in 1957 inspired the musical language in which to tell it. The resistance of the musical material to operatic norms parallels the resistance of the miners to their oppressors, as well as safeguarding against any hint of chocolate-box pathos. Episodes in quasi-tonal jazzy style occasionally evoke the world outside, but Rautavaara goes nowhere near as far as Berg in this respect and the chorus's Schoenbergian speech-song declamation is a serious blot on the aesthetic landscape. Overall, the consistency of musical language is highly impressive yet may, paradoxically, prove one reason why the most *The Mine* can ever hope to command is respect.

Any cast willing to take on this dauntingly unglamorous music, and able to do so with such authority, commands rather more than respect. There is certainly some strain in the singing but also a compelling quota of dramatic truth and passion. Hannu Lintu's belief in the work shines through and he brings the Tampere Philharmonic with him undaunted, as the three 25-minute acts take us from the outside world to the edge of the mine and finally to its claustrophobic interior.

This first of Rautavaara's operas may or may not be, in his own words, "perhaps the best opera I have ever written"; I for one take more away from his single-personality-centred dramas – *Vincent*, *Thomas* and *Aleksis Kivi* (though not from his *Rasputin*). Still, *The Mine* is certainly serious and stirring stuff. This recording fills a major gap in the Rautavaara discography and fills it with distinction.

David Fanning

Rossi

Cleopatra

Dimitra Theodossiou *sop*..... Cleopatra
Alessandro Liberatore *ten*..... Marco Antonio

Paolo Pecchioli *bass*..... Ottavio Cesare
Sebastian Catana *bar*..... Diomede
William Corrà *bass*..... Proculejo
Tiziana Carraro *mez*..... Ottavia
Paola Gardina *mez*..... Carmiana
Marchigiana Vincenzo Bellini Lyric Chorus;
Marchigiana Philharmonic Orchestra /
David Crescenzi

Naxos © 8 660291/2 (105' • DDD • S/N)

Recorded live at the Sferisterio Opera Festival,

Macerata, Italy, July 24 & 29, 2008

A fascinating opera by a forgotten composer overshadowed by Verdi



Lauro Rossi (1812-85) sounds a thoroughly good egg. He was successful as a composer of operas – mainly, it seems, neo-Donizettian comedies – until a flop

in 1834 led him to Mexico, Cuba and the United States as a conductor and impresario. He and his wife, a singer, returned to Italy in 1843, where his composing career took off again. By the end of the decade his reputation was high enough to secure him the post of director of the Milan Conservatory, where he pursued what the scholar Julian Budden described as a liberal policy. Rossi published what became a standard treatise on harmony and was an advocate of the study and performance of early music. In 1870 he became director of the Conservatory in Naples.

Rossi is a forgotten figure today, except possibly as one of the contributors to the abortive project, proposed by Verdi, to commemorate Rossini with a Requiem. So much praise to the organisers of the Opera Festival at Macerata, Rossi's birthplace, for their enterprise in staging *Cleopatra* in 2008; and to Naxos for issuing this recording taken from the two performances.

Cleopatra was Rossi's penultimate opera, performed in Turin in 1876; the European premiere of *Aida* was in 1872. Comparisons are inevitable and it must be said that Rossi was no Verdi. *Cleopatra*'s aria in Act 2, well enough shaped, sounds second-hand compared with, say, *Aida*'s "O patria mia". But there are some strongly dramatic scenes, such as where *Cleopatra* improbably turns up in Rome intending to murder Mark Antony's wife: her two-octave drop at "Sì, *Cleopatra*!" leads to a powerful "ensemble of perplexity", Rossi the academic then stepping forward with a fugal passage at "Trema, Roma".

There are no outstanding voices but the performance is strong enough to appeal to anyone curious about the byways of 19th-century opera. No libretto is provided in the booklet (although it is available online) and the same production is available on a Naxos DVD. Richard Lawrence

DVD & Blu-ray

Gould revelations • Abbado's live Mahler Ninth • Die Walküre from Bayreuth

Glenn Gould

'Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould'
A film by Michèle Hozer and Peter Raymont
Drakes Avenue Pictures © DVD DAP7793; Blu-ray DAB7803
(108' • NTSC • 1080i • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 0)

Revelations aplenty scattered through this keenly paced Gould portrait



"Dying," joked a Sony Classical executive of Glenn Gould, "was a great career move for him." Since the Canadian pianist's death in 1982, just after his 50th birthday, the fascination with Gould shows

no signs of abating. Rather the reverse, in fact. Biographies, regular repackagings of the recordings and a steady stream of film documentaries are but the commercial side of the Gould industry (his second recording of the "Gouldberg" Variations has sold nearly two million copies). There's a Glenn Gould Park, Foundation, Scholarship, Annual Lecture; he has featured in short stories and inspired musical works, a life-size statue and a Canadian postage stamp.

Gould abandoned life as a concert pianist at the age of 31, having given just 200 concerts in his entire career. "I detest audiences," he says at one stage. "They are a force of evil." What else is there to know about this pianist? Well, quite a lot, as this expertly paced, industriously sourced and artfully edited portrait reveals.

It includes much footage that has never been seen before, relying on numerous talking heads and Gould himself to provide the narrative. It also delves into at least one area of his mysterious private life of which most of his global army of fans will have been unaware. In 1968 Cornelia Foss left her husband, the composer and pianist Lukas Foss, and took herself and her two small children off to Toronto to share their lives with this charming, intellectual, egocentric, eccentric musical genius. All three speak frankly about the experience and the fact that, after four years, Mrs Foss returned to her husband. Gould, increasingly neurotic, self-obsessed and paranoid, had proved impossible to live with. So – not quite the asexual or closet homosexual that everyone had assumed. Did ever a more

self-absorbed, hypochondriacal control freak step into a recording studio? But then, has any pianist (other than Horowitz in a different way) influenced a whole generation of pianists as he did? Or so craftily manipulated his public image for posterity? Glenn Gould wanted to have his cake and eat it and, nearly 30 years after his death, seems to have done so very successfully, as this consistently absorbing documentary makes manifest.

Jeremy Nicholas

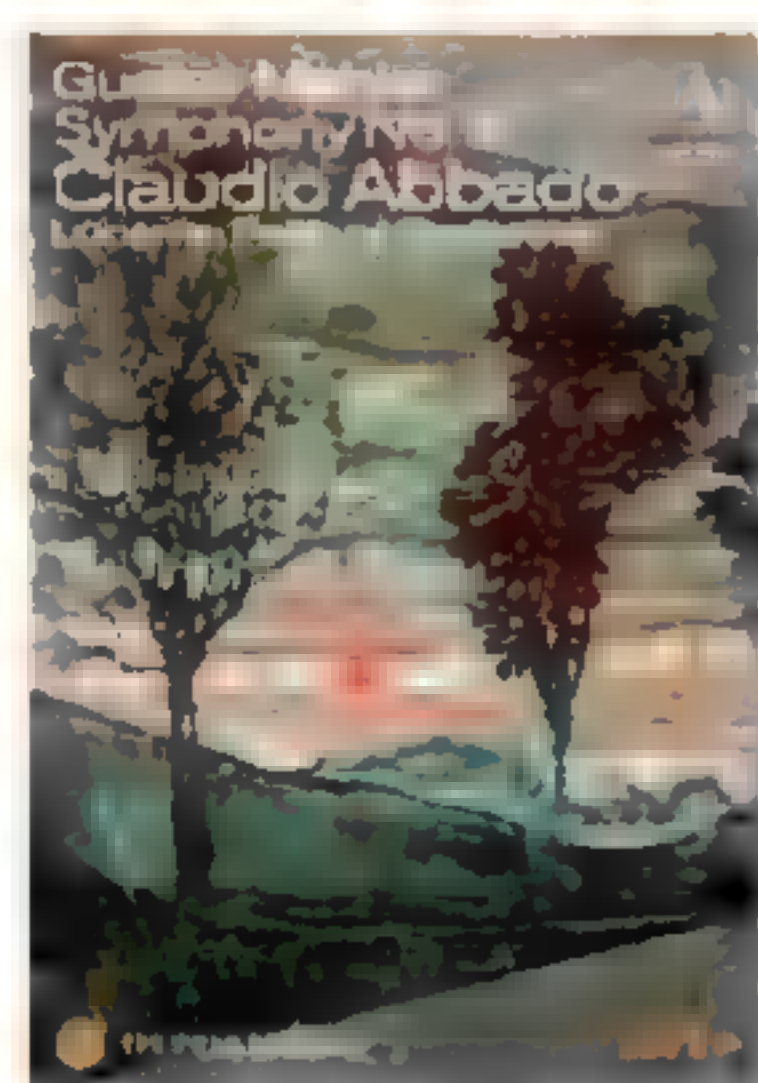
Mahler

Symphony No 9
Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado

Accentus © DVD ACC20214; Blu-ray ACC10214
(95' • NTSC • 1080i • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DTS 5.1 and DTS HD • 0)

Recorded live at the Concert Hall of the Culture and Convention Center, Lucerne, August 19-21, 2010
Special features include Multi-Angle Conductor Camera in the Andante comodo

Abbado's unparalleled 'orchestra of soloists' in Mahler's valedictory Ninth



The fact that Mahler's Ninth no longer presents a fierce challenge to orchestras and their musicians can bring losses as well as gains. Listeners brought up on Bruno Walter's 78s may even feel that the sound of an

orchestra clinging on for dear life in music it can barely play is part of the intended effect. Claudio Abbado clearly doesn't agree. This, his fourth commercial recording of the work, is even more luminous, elegant and subtly integrated than its predecessors. In some recent Abbado interpretations, the Mediterranean fluency and rapid pacing implies a hint of complacency or, at least, a reluctance to wrestle with those darker and more tumultuous corners of the score. I didn't feel that for one moment in his glorious account of Mahler's Fourth Symphony (EuroArts, 2/11) and it certainly isn't the case with this Ninth, which can only be described as unmissable.

The first movement, marked *Andante comodo*, now seems ideally plotted, more spacious than in his previous DVD recording with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra (EuroArts, 3/05), with playing even more

proficient than in his famous Berlin concert version (DG, 10/02). There is perhaps less gain in the inner movements, where sceptics (who tend to be American with this conductor) will levy the charge that Mahler executed with the refinement and subtlety of chamber music is Mahler deracinated or Mahler-lite. Perhaps so, yet it hardly seems to matter: Abbado's almost playful approach brings its own rewards. The great final *Adagio*, crowning the reading even more effectively than before, is as deeply affecting as I have ever heard it.

For me, and I suspect for Shirley Apthorp who has written the accompanying booklet-note, Abbado's only real rival here is Leonard Bernstein – ideally in the quite elderly (1971) performance now on DVD (DG, 2/06). The surprise is that in his less insistently emotive way Abbado is just as likely to prompt the tears. An interpretation that might seem too cool is in fact superbly gauged to provide maximal catharsis by the close – and there are intrusive post-performance shots of weeping concertgoers thrown in to prove it. As one expects in Lucerne, the reluctant icon commands absolute respect from hand-picked musicians and well-heeled audience members alike. When the music finally ends and, as in any truly great account of this highly affecting score, one feels that life itself is ebbing away, all present are held in awed silence. Even when the time comes for Abbado to finally lower his hands and for the players to put down their instruments, the spell remains unbroken for a while longer. The ovation when it comes is suitably tremendous. The conductor looks as gaunt as ever but happy with what has been achieved.

The Lucerne Festival's recent switch of allegiance to the relatively new Accentus label has brought only minor changes in presentational style. The cover artwork is unexpected but apposite – the tree imagery is Egon Schiele's. Inside, the obsession with maestro Willem Mengelberg is a little puzzling given Abbado's suaver manner. It is presumably Abbado who asked for the lights to be dimmed in the final stages. Did he want the so-called multi-angle camera feature focused on the podium (in the first movement alone)? The sound is good if dryish still. Strongly recommended – but you knew that.

David Gutman



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Rossini

Petite Messe solennelle

Alexandrina Pendatchanska *sop* Manuela Custer

contr Stefano Secco *ten* Mirco Palazzi *bass*

Chorus of Leipzig Opera; Leipzig Gewandhaus

Chorus and Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly

EuroArts ② DVD 205 7428 (85' • NTSC • 16:9 •

PCM stereo and DTS 5.1 • 0 • s)

Recorded live, November 2008

A stylish live performance of Rossini's beefed-up 'little' Mass



Shortly before he died in 1868, Rossini orchestrated his last substantial masterpiece, the *Petite Messe solennelle*, not because it required orchestration but to stop chancers and go-getters doing so after his death.

The original scoring for 12 voices, two pianos and harmonium is so distinctive and so apt to the work's courtly, gamesome and yet at the same time angst-ridden character that one wonders why anyone would wish to undertake the far-from-easy task of performing it with more substantial choral forces than Rossini originally intended.

That said, it is a work to which choral societies have been increasingly drawn in recent years. Riccardo Chailly first pointed the way in 1993 with a superb CD recording with the Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale, Bologna (Decca, 2/95), and this live performance filmed in the Leipzig Gewandhaus in November 2008 is if anything even finer. The combined choirs of the Gewandhaus and the Leipzig Opera sing like chamber musicians in a stylish, spruce and beautifully scaled performance – the kind Mendelssohn might have conducted had he lived to hear his admired friend's valedictory masterpiece.

Chailly has two dark-toned soloists on the distaff side, nicely matched with a mobile bass and quick-eyed tenor. If there is a reservation to be entered it concerns the soprano Alexandrina Pendatchanska, whose somewhat restless singing, and the equally restless camerawork it seems to inspire, doesn't always sit well in the larger context. The pivotal "Crucifixus" is none too well projected. The *Agnus Dei* of the ever-reliable Manuela Custer is, by contrast, superb.

Rossini's orchestration, itself not without interest as a period phenomenon, is realised with tact and imagination by Chailly and his Gewandhaus players, and organist Michael Schönheit gives a magisterial account of the transitional "Prélude religieux", which emerges here as the kind of large-scale organ improvisation Rossini might well have expected it to be in the altered context.

Richard Osborne



Wagner

Die Walküre

Johan Botha *ten*.....Siegmond

Kwangchul Youn *bass*.....Hunding

Albert Dohmen *bass-bar*.....Wotan

Edith Haller *sop*.....Sieglinde

Linda Watson *sop*.....Brünnhilde

Mihoko Fujimura *mez*.....Fricka

Sonja Mühleck *sop*.....Gerhilde

Anna Gabler *sop*.....Ortlinde

Martina Dike *mez*.....Waltraute

Simone Schröder *contr*.....Schwertleite

Miriam Gordon-Stewart *sop*.....Helmwige

Wilke te Brummelstroete *mez*.....Siegrune

Annette Küttenbaum *mez*.....Grimgerde

Alexandra Petersamer *mez*.....Rossweisse

Bayreuth Festival Chorus and Orchestra /

Christian Thielemann

Stage director Tankred Dorst

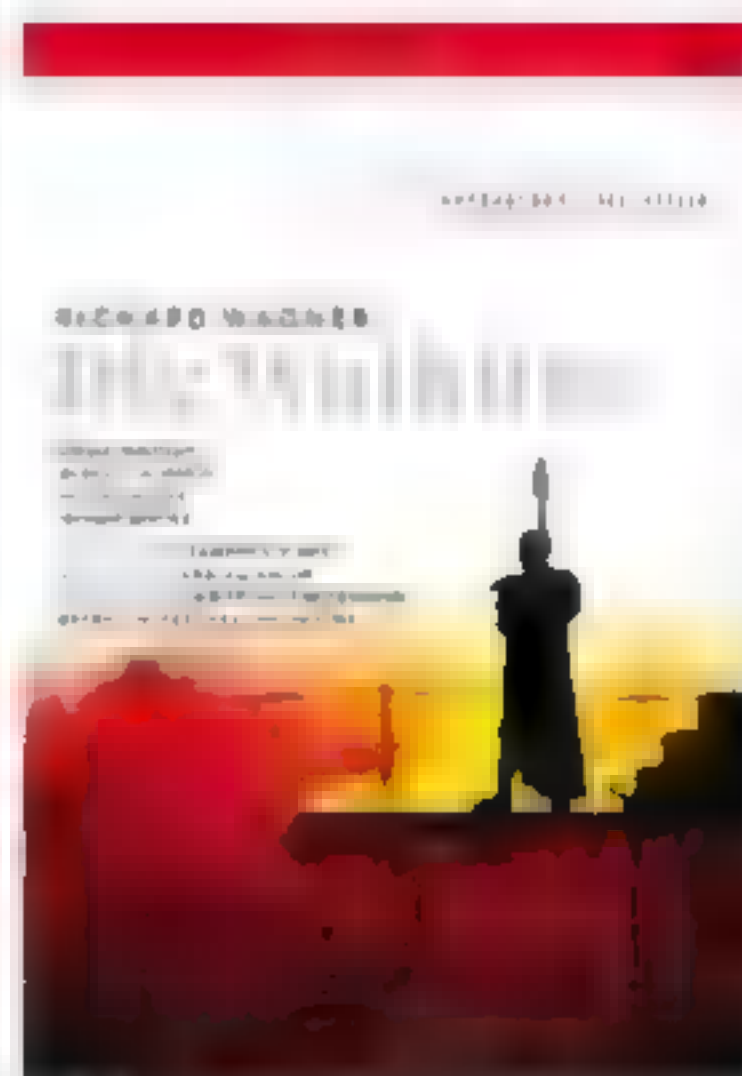
Video director Michael Beyer

Opus Arte ② DVD OA1045D; ③ OABD7081D

(4h 19' • NTSC • 1080i • 16:9 • LPCM stereo and DTS

5.1 • 0 • S/N/s)

Recorded live, August 21, 2010



The current Bayreuth *Ring* was originally meant to be produced by Lars von Trier, who might have been expected to match the variously radical takes on *Tristan*, *Parsifal*, *Die Meistersinger* and *Lohengrin* which have been staged alongside it at the festival. In the event, the veteran Tankred Dorst came up with something closer to the non-confrontational style of Wolfgang Wagner, and those opposed to such conventionalism have argued that Christian Thielemann's conducting is the main reason for giving this version the time of day. When Opus Arte issued performances from 2008 on CD (1/10),

Mike Ashman concluded that even though "for Thielemann's work alone, the set is essential", it was inferior in vocal terms to the Bayreuth cycles conducted by Krauss (1953), Keilberth (1955), Böhm (1966-67) and Barenboim (1991-92).

I have not made a direct comparison but I suspect that things were better vocally in 2010 than in 2008. Edith Haller (replacing Eva-Maria Westbroek) is good as Sieglinde – especially in Act 2 – and Johan Botha (in place of Endrik Wotrich) is outstanding throughout as Siegmund. Wotan (Albert Dohmen) and Brünnhilde (Linda Watson) are the same as in 2008, and their commanding performances, particularly in Act 3, suggest that they have both grown into their roles. Dorst's production, and this filming of it, are at their best in the later stages of Act 3 and the result is a powerful and affecting account of one of *The Ring*'s greatest episodes. Thielemann has been saving up his broadest tempi and most fervently shaped articulation for this conclusion and, even though faster speeds enable Wotans to sing with smoother phrasing than Dohmen can manage here, this is still an impressive demonstration of interpretative conviction, made even more absorbing by a staging in which Brünnhilde emerges as the dominant figure.

The first two acts are less well conceived for film, with both staging and setting (especially the appearance of spring in Act 1) understated to a fault. Seeing *Walküre* in the context of the rest of the cycle should explain some production details which are obscure (in both senses) here, but there's nothing obscure or understated about Thielemann's galvanising presence in the pit and seeing its effect on his singers in Act 3 makes these DVDs even more recommendable than the original CDs. **Arnold Whittall**

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

Violinist heaven

A new Heifetz collection ferrets out some newly released recordings

Following in the wake of the massive, Grammy Award-winning “**Jascha Heifetz** Collection” and the rather more modest Heifetz instalment in Sony BMG’s “Original Jacket Collection” comes this 104-CD epic “Complete Album Collection” which, in effect, redistributes the Collection’s contents to suit a nostalgia-hungry audience, adding some “first releases” and a DVD, “Heifetz in Performance”. There must be many a UK-based fiddle-fancying baby-boomer who vividly recalls seeking out Heifetz LPs back in the restrictive days when LP imports were hard to come by. They’ll no doubt remember how we had to rely on specialist dealers and friends travelling abroad to locate what were – and still are, of course – magical recordings. Sony’s handsome oblong presentation box neatly encases virtually a small shelf’s worth of sturdy, CD-size original sleeve reproductions, many of them, in visual terms, classic “period” pieces, with notes that are usually clear enough to read, the discs themselves for the most part exactly as they were when first issued – which means that disc 12, which contains Heifetz’s first recording of Prokofiev’s Second Violin Concerto (under Serge Koussevitzky) plays for a paltry 24’12”. In the “Collection” it was coupled with the Brahms Concerto.

‘Many a fiddle-fancying baby-boomer must vividly recall seeking out Heifetz LPs’

Which brings me to what is, for Heifetz aficionados, by far the most interesting aspect of the set, the bonus discs, three in all. Just one item, a 1945 San Francisco version of Chausson’s *Poème* with Monteux conducting, has been out before (on Testament). One work is totally new to Heifetz’s discography, a razor-sharp 1941 performance of the third movement of Ernst Toch’s *Divertimento*, Op 37 No 2, with viola player William Primrose, who also features in one of two first-release world-premiere recordings, this one made a year after the Toch, the work Benjamin’s *Romantic Fantasy* for violin and viola, also stunningly well played. Heifetz’s working relationship with Primrose drew to a sad close in 1964 when the great viola player’s encroaching deafness led to various technical problems and the need to abandon what turned out to be a heavily edited recording of Dvořák’s Piano Quintet. Heifetz and his colleagues soon went on to re-record the work with Primrose’s pupil Joseph de Pasquale but listening now to this first release of the Primrose original reveals much of great beauty, even in the face of obvious flaws.

Less conspicuous flaws impinge on Heifetz’s 1946 version of Bruch’s *Scottish Fantasy* (one of four versions included in the set and that now serves as the work’s premiere recording), where security of attack and some luscious tonal projection add to the overall excitement. An alternative version of the Brahms Concerto under Koussevitzky, recorded two years before the famous 1939 Victor 78s, arrives with a richer bass-line than its successor and a rather more distant balance for the soloist, but the playing is superb, especially in the cadenza and Heifetz’s angelic emergence from it. Previously unreleased versions of Beethoven’s Seventh Sonata (with Emanuel Bay, 1936), Schubert’s Sonata in G minor (with Arpád

Sándor, 1934) and Bach’s Chaconne (1942) all pre-date better-known Heifetz-Victor versions of the same works, and reveal enough inflectional and tonal differences to warrant close scrutiny.

So what is missing? Not very much. The 1944 American Decca recordings (all short “encore” pieces) are now separately available, in superior transfers, from their current owners, DG – so no problems there. Testament has released alternative versions of Lalo’s *Symphonie espagnole* and the *Kreutzer* Sonata with Moiseiwitsch but otherwise this dazzling collection more or less mops up. Needless to say, the “original album” aspect brings with it one minor irritant (as it did with Sony’s Award-winning Horowitz set released last year), namely the duplication of certain recordings that were released on LP more than once, most obviously two great E flat works by Mozart, the *Sinfonia concertante* and the String Trio (with Primrose and Feuermann, in what sound like slightly different transfers), Heifetz’s first recording of Richard Strauss’s E flat Violin Sonata, his second version of Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto (under Walter Susskind) and a selection of short pieces, some of them presented in “electronic stereo” though, if memory serves, they sound a good deal better on CD than they did on vulnerable vinyl.

Anyone interested in checking out (via the online *Gramophone* Archive) my fairly comprehensive review of the original “Collection” from November 1994 will find my views on individual performances and transfers which, for the most part, remain much as they were. Certain recordings that on LP sounded as dry as dust have been subtly softened (I’m thinking in particular of Spohr’s Eighth Concerto) but most transfers make a palatable case for sonic preferences that were very much of their time. Heifetz himself invariably takes centre stage which, given the dazzling quality of his playing, is no bad thing. I’ve often said in these pages that he somehow packed more tonal variety into a single phrase than many of his colleagues managed for a whole concerto, and that claim still stands. His may not be the only way, but once heard you can never forget the lacerating attack, the unique “speaking” tone (film buffs will immediately recognise the Russian-Jewish style) and the sheer intensity of it all. I’ve been listening to Heifetz records for some 45 years and the majority of them still cast a forceful spell.

So, a fabulous tribute to the man often described as “The Violinist of the Century”, and possibly the last of its kind that we’ll see on disc. Things will be different for the coming generation. Mastertapes will again be summoned and the miracle of downloading will mean the option of chronological or composer “filing”, which is far from the case here, where the order of contents emerges as rather random, to say the least. Don’t lose the 310-page, hard-back booklet, whatever you do, or you’ll be totally lost. And the booklet is a work of art in itself.

THE RECORDINGS



Various Cpsrs

Cpte Album Collection **Heifetz**
Sony © (104 CDs + DVD)
88697 70050-2

'I've been listening
to Heifetz records
for some 45 years
and the majority of
them still cast a
forceful spell'



[Challenge Classics 100001]



CELLO CONCERTOS
(JULIAN STECKEL: CELLO)

Extremely rare recordings of essential concertos of the 20th century from versatile cellist Julian Steckel, First Prize winner at the ARD International Music Competition in 2000.

[Challenge Classics 100001]



ORIGINAL RECORDINGS 1951-1966
(OTTERLOO: CHO/HAGUE PHILHARMONIC)

Historical recordings, digitally re-mastered and combined in a stunning seven-disc box set. Spot-lighting world-famous orchestras, this set allows us to rediscover a true Dutch master.

[BBC 1819]



PALESTRINA VOLUME 1
(THE SIXTEEN/CHRISTOPHERS: DIR)

The first ascending devotion to Palestrina, possibly the greatest composer of liturgical music of all time. This disc features some of the sumptuous music he wrote for the Assumption.

[EMI 100001]



LILI KRAUS PLAYS MOZART & BACH
(LILI KRAUS: PIANO)

First time on CD! Lili Kraus (1902-1986) is one of the most famous and respected pianists of the 20th century.

[Royal Philharmonic Masterworks 190401]



BACH: TOCCATA AND FUGUE IN D MINOR
(JONATHAN CARMY: CHO/RPO)

Jonathan Carmy conducts the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in a performance of several of Bach's best-loved orchestral works.

[Royal Philharmonic Masterworks 190401]



DEBUSSY: PIANO WORKS
(ROMAN D'HORA: PIANO/RPO)

One of Britain's leading pianists performs a stunning selection of Debussy's best-known piano works.

[Globe 100001]



MASCAGNI: CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA
(SIMIONATO: SOPRANO/CORELLI: TENOR)

In this performance from December 1963, mezzo Giulietta Simionato gives a shattering, go-for-broke performance, and is joined by Franco Corelli, then the greatest lyrical-spinto tenor in the world.

[Concord Chamber Music Society 100001]



BRUBECK/GANDOLFI/FOSS
(CONCORD CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY)

This debut album contains two world premiere recordings, by Chris Brubeck (son of jazz legend Dave) and Michael Gandolfi. Both pieces were performed to great acclaim at the Tanglewood Festival in August 2010.

[Opera Studio 100001]



VERDI: RIGOLETTO
(FAVARDOTTI: TENOR/SCOTTO: SOPRANO/GIULINI: CHO)

Taped in 1966, we find the tenor at his most engaging as the dangerous Duke, absolutely certain of himself, singing with great passion and energy. At the same time Scotto paints a lovely, fragile picture of Gilda." — *ClassicalNet*

REPLAY

Great musicians live in Montevideo

Heifetz, Oistrakh et al in Uruguay

Live Heifetz recitals are less than easy to come by, which makes a CD released by Alpha Omega Sound of a 1955 recital at the SODRE Theatre in Montevideo so extremely valuable. Heifetz's regular accompanist at the time, Brooks Smith, is very prominently recorded, Heifetz's characteristic tone coming across – as many who heard him live have told me – as extremely focused but not especially “big”. The programme opens with a Heifetz recorded “first”, Vitali's Chaconne with piano accompaniment (the commercial recording is with organ), less of a powerhouse experience than the record, until the very end, which is pretty sensational. Debussy's Sonata is subtly different to the version with Emanuel Bay from 1950, a little more capricious in places, though tempi are quite similar. The high-spot of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata is the theme-and-variations second movement, a feast of tonal variety, and Kreisler's arrangement of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dance* Op 72 No 7 (really No 8) is a newcomer to Heifetz's discography, the performance swift but expressive. Lili Boulanger's cheerful *Cortège* is otherwise available played by Heifetz only as an acoustic recording, and Strauss's “An einsamer Quelle”, Op 9 No 2, as a 1934 EMI recording, included in the big Sony set, though this ravishing 1955 version quite outshines it (the timings, by the way, are identical). Wieniawski's *Capriccio-Waltz* squeaks a bit to start but soon settles, the capriccio element being the main priority, and the programme ends with a white-hot account of Ravel's *Tzigane*.

A **David Oistrakh** recital from the previous year (with pianist Vladimir Yampolsky) is hardly less remarkable, its amazing centrepiece being a

memorably dramatic, piano-accompanied performance of Sibelius's Violin Concerto, which not only finds Oistrakh on cracking form but sheds fresh light on the bare bones of score. The same recital also includes Chausson's *Poème* and Leclair's Sonata No 3 in D.

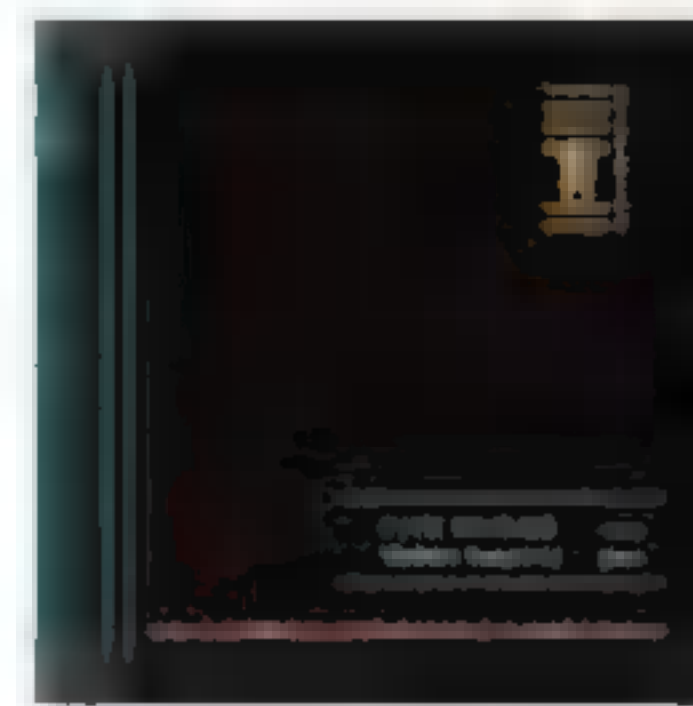
Other recordings in the series, which should be forthcoming before too long (and which you can, if you wish, sample on a separate sampler disc), include another Oistrakh recital, Mischa Elman playing the Mendelssohn Concerto (again with piano), Leonid Kogan raging wild in Prokofiev's First Sonata (a work that Kogan never recorded commercially) and programmes featuring Andrés Segovia, Walter Gieseking, Claudio Arrau, Friedrich Gulda (two separate recitals), Lili Kraus (including a strikingly assertive account of Schumann's *Papillons*, included complete on the sampler CD) and Marian Anderson (the sampler ends with two lieder by Strauss). I'd call that quite a windfall!

THE RECORDINGS

Beethoven, Debussy, etc Vn Wks **Heifetz**
Alpha Omega (M) SODRE1

Sibelius, Chausson, etc Vn Wks **Oistrakh**
Alpha Omega (M) SODRE2

Various Cpsrs Sampler **Various artists**
Alpha Omega (M) SODRE SAMPLER1



Old and new musical values

A Mendelssohn first and Bach on a high

Pristine Audio has followed its recent reissue of the *Kreutzer* Sonata played by **Albert Sammons** and **William Murdoch** with an equally desirable coupling, taken from Columbia 78s, of Beethoven's *Archduke* Trio and Mendelssohn's Second Piano Trio. The *Archduke* (1926) finds the esteemed duo joined, on location at the Wigmore Hall, London, by cellist **WH Squire** for a performance that's often a fair match, in terms of its warmth and wit, for a contemporary HMV version featuring Thibaud, Casals and Cortot. The Mendelssohn is more rough-edged, the cello's bass-baritone replaced by the viola's light baritone, which is entrusted to the much-feted **Lionel Tertis**. I loved the grandeur of the closing pages, and the 1925 recording, surely the C minor Trio's first, is remarkably good. The few minor pitch problems in the *Archduke* have been largely ironed out, while the slow movement features some rapturously beautiful playing from Sammons.

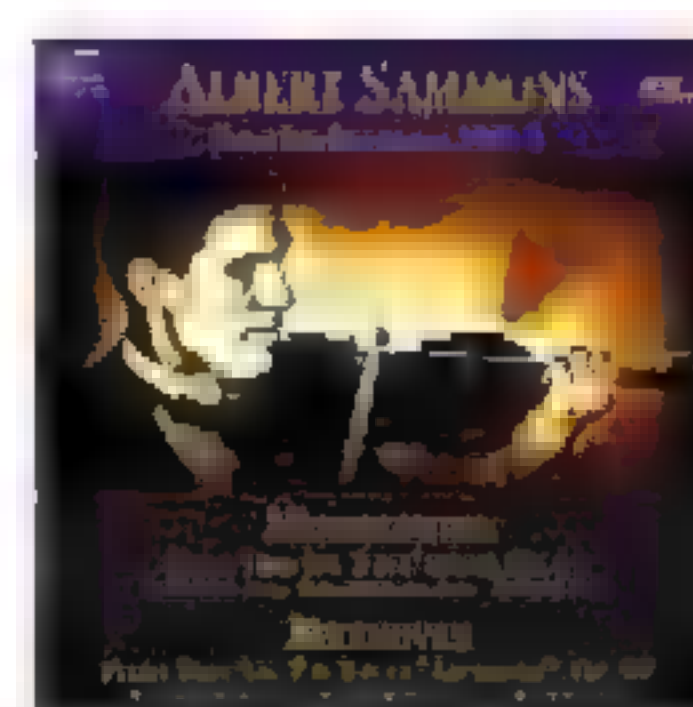
From the old-world charm of sweet-centred, leisured musicianship, I turn to one of the 20th century's true musical radicals, pianist **Glenn Gould**, taken from us before the century's end, still with so much to offer. An Andromeda all-Bach double-pack gathers together some of Gould's earliest surviving recorded performances, the most remarkable being an *Italian Concerto* from October 1952, the finale in

particular flying off at a terrific lick with colossal rhythmic impetus. Surely the 1958 Concertgebouw relay of Bach's First Keyboard Concerto is Gould's most exciting account of the work (Dimitri Mitropoulos conducts), more so than the one from 1955 under Ernest MacMillan (also included), or indeed the Sony commercial recording under Bernstein. The same double-pack also includes excerpts from *The Art of Fugue* and the *Goldberg Variations* recorded in Moscow in 1957, a complete *Goldberg Variations* from Salzburg recorded two years later and a 1954 Toronto recording of the Fifth keyboard Partita. If you're not someone who objects to occasionally constricted sound, this is just about the best sampling there is of Gould playing Bach “on a high”. 🎧

THE RECORDINGS

Beethoven 'Archduke' Trio
Mendelssohn Pf Trio No 2
Sammons, Murdoch, Tertis, Squire
Pristine Audio (S) PACM073

Bach Kybd Wks **Gould**
Andromeda (S) (2) ANDRCD9076



Books

A composer's extraordinary life ■ Schwarzkopf puts the record straight ■ Strauss surveyed

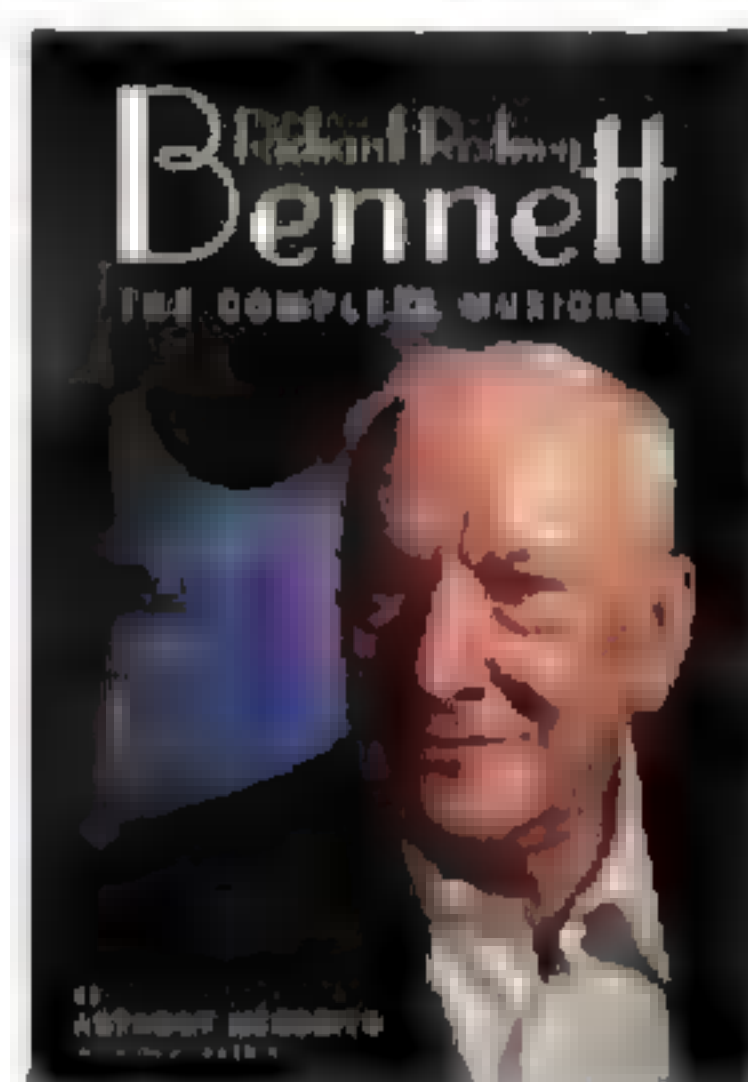
Richard Rodney Bennett

The Complete Musician

Anthony Meredith with Paul Harris

Omnibus Press, PB, 596pp, £25

ISBN 978-1-84938-545-9



This duo of tenacious investigators, having brought out large, readable books on two Malcolms – Arnold and Williamson – has now turned its searchlight on a living composer.

The prolific and versatile

Richard Rodney Bennett has cooperated fully to create a consistently fascinating portrait.

Bennett's father was first a teacher of English and a singer to professional levels: he worked in theatre and became a successful writer. As Roydon Barrie he wrote lyrics for songs by Haydn Wood and Eric Coates which caught the mood of the 1920s, and as Rodney Bennett he wrote successful books, musicals and plays for children, collaborating regularly with Roger Quilter. But this hyperactive polymath was in poor health and died in 1948, when Richard was 11. Richard's mother, always a strong personality, was influential. Understandably so, since she was at St Paul's Girls' School under Holst, who advised her to go the Royal College of Music, where she studied composition with him. Although she supported her husband rather than having an independent career, her playing of Debussy and Ravel made an indelible impression on her son.

Like Britten, Bennett composed as a child. Music was always what he wanted to do but he soon scorned his parents' genteel tastes. He was lucky in going to Leighton Park, a Quaker boarding school favourably disposed to the arts, and while there discovered Webern simply through finding a seven-bar music example in Salazar's *Music in our Time* – one of the Bagatelles for string quartet. "I just knew it was magic. It was a jewel box! Seeing that Bagatelle opened things up and pointed me along a particular path." Then he studied the published works of Elisabeth Lutyens; still only 14, he wrote her a fan letter and went to see her for coaching. He also sought out Lennox Berkeley, with whom he studied at the Royal Academy of Music. But the institution was so moribund

that he formed a trio of malcontents with Susan Bradshaw and Cornelius Cardew, with both of whom he developed rewarding musical partnerships. They were the most adventurous musicians in London but it still wasn't satisfying, so Bennett went to Darmstadt and studied with Boulez in Paris. He toed the serial party line strictly for a while, then moved away while retaining his own kind of 12-note technique.

Bennett had lucrative commissions to write film scores from the age of 19 and for most of his life this was a parallel career: he became a film-composer of genius, often unjustly derided by the highbrow critics. That was a factor in his move to New York in 1979. But his serial works, with a fastidious command of texture and rhythm, include major achievements in mid-century British music, such as the second of four operas, *The Mines of Sulphur* (1963), and the Piano Concerto (1968), the second of 15 concertos so far.

And then there's his international career as a jazz musician – composer, arranger, pianist and singer, leading to showbiz celebrity through working with a succession of leading jazz singers such as Cleo Laine and Marion Montgomery. For years Bennett kept his different personae separate but *Concerto for Stan Getz* (1990) was a landmark in bringing his jazz side into the concert hall. After that Bennett rebelled against his serial background and allowed his accessible film style to fertilise his concert music. This extraordinarily rich life is comprehensively documented on a grand scale – 596 pages – including plots of every film and opera: there are 65 pages of notes, a list of works and a discography.

Peter Dickinson

The Schwarzkopf Tapes

An Artist Replies to a Hostile Biography

Edited by Alan Sanders

Classical Recordings Quarterly

and The Elisabeth Schwarzkopf/

Walter Legge Society, PB, 136pp, £10

ISBN 978-0-9567361-0-9

One cannot but feel for Alan Sanders who, in the context of his introduction to this energetic hatchet-job on the late Alan Jefferson's 1996 biography of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, confesses to sometimes encouraging "a negative response in Elisabeth's reactions; of pointing out and underlining aberrations in the written text". He should have been more dispassionate,



he says, but was caught up in what seemed to be an unfair and biased piece of work. Well, the catalogue of factual errors on Jefferson's part seems, on Sanders's evidence, to be dazzling, a fact reflected not only

in the main body of the text (which deals with Jefferson's first three chapters) but in a mass of supplementary notes covering the remainder of the book. Sanders's method was to read a passage from Jefferson's original and have Schwarzkopf react to it. She had a colleague on hand to check facts, and we have to take her challenges on trust.

She could be rather rude. For example, regarding Maria Callas, Jefferson wrote, not unreasonably: "...the tragic American-Greek diva, who burned herself out far too soon." And Schwarzkopf's somewhat intemperate response? "What does he know about this, the silly clot?"

The book is essentially an unedited interview with next to nothing in the way of historical explanation. Regarding the three principal historic German "states", the dialogue goes:

ES: ...what is the First Reich, anyway?

AS: No idea!

ES: And what was the Third Reich? That's Hitler. And what would be the Second Reich?

AS: I don't know.

ES: Surely you ought to know.

AS: Should I? I only know what the Third Reich was, not the First or the Second."

Nothing else is said on the matter. But, hold on, Sanders is an experienced editor and it shouldn't be up to me, or you, to research the fact that the First Reich started in the lands ruled by Charlemagne from the ninth century and finished in the 19th, and that the Second Reich was ruled by the Hohenzollern dynasty, in the areas known as Prussia and Brandenburg, from 1871 to 1919, which fell with the ending of the First World War. All this should surely have been presented as a footnote. An index of names and subjects would also have been useful.

Schwarzkopf's family background and early career come under close scrutiny, both from Jefferson and from Schwarzkopf herself in reaction to what he writes, and there are some interesting tidbits about other singers. As to



Frozen: Elisabeth Schwarzkopf in *La bohème*, 1961

the ever-present Nazis, Schwarzkopf suggests that she virtually never heard any of the party speeches and that it was primarily her mother who encouraged her not to rock the boat by sailing against the wind, ie by saying “please put the flag out, please have the [word not clear] ready...”. Apparently her mother learnt “that the Jews teach you, immediately, that if you have been asked something – a question that you don’t want to answer, you ask them a question back first – never answer, ask them back.” Sorry, but it all sounds a little like idle party chit-chat. And when Jefferson claims that, post-war, the majority of Germans considered themselves to be entirely innocent, she reacts with the words “...and why shouldn’t they?” Not, I would have thought, the sentiment of someone humbled by her country’s murderous recent past.

The real irony is that, for all its evident faults and blatant accusations, Jefferson’s book, which seems respectful at the very least, presents a wilful, ambitious and alluring woman who was highly gifted, who worked hard and would brook no compromise in pursuit of her career. He may have got some of his facts wrong but I doubt that the portrait he painted was too far from the truth. Sanders’s elderly interviewee, on the other hand, comes across as brittle, defensive, revisionist, intolerant and hell-bent on using her

still-potent charm to paper over any “inappropriate” issues. Schwarzkopf devotees will inevitably find a certain amount to engage with but I rather think that a 3000-word article focusing the main lines of argument would have done both Schwarzkopf and Jefferson more justice.

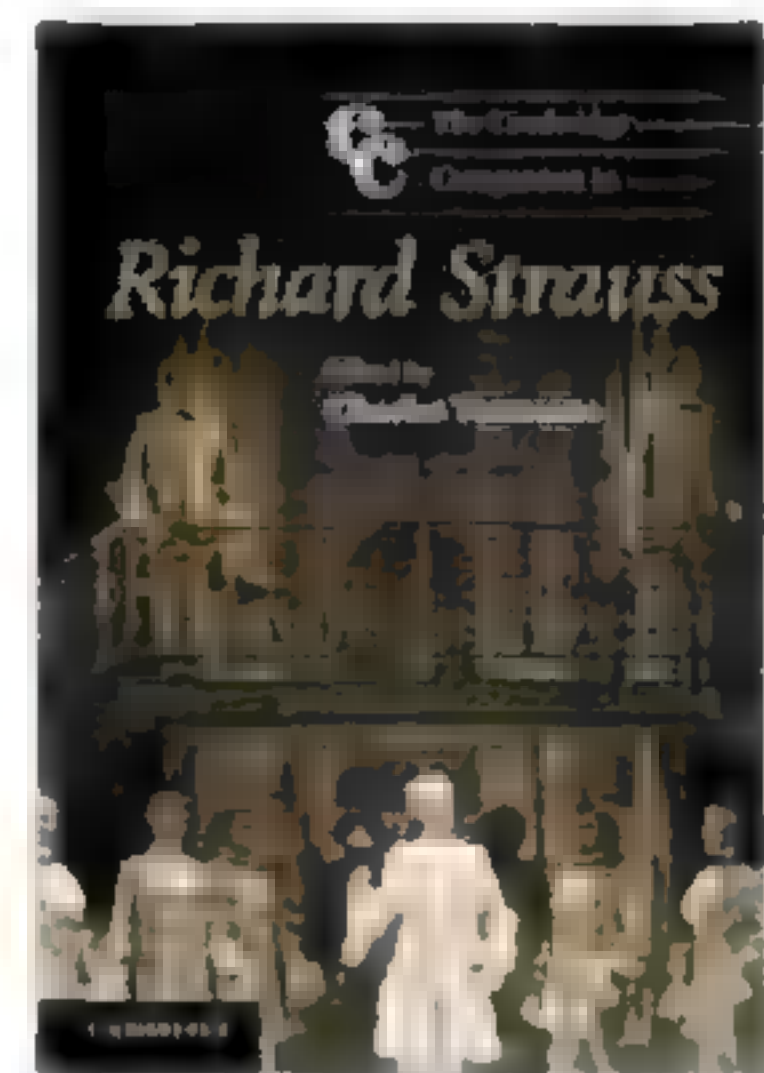
Rob Cowan

The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss

Edited by Charles Youmans

Cambridge University Press, PB, 386pp, £19

ISBN 978-0-521728-157



Although never abandoned by the musical public, Strauss’s critical reputation rather went into eclipse in the immediate post-Second World War period, partly because of his Nazi associations, living in Germany during the war years, when, we are told, he had dialogues with both Hitler and Goebbels in trying to secure continuing performances of his own music and making sure his family was safe. But, by the end of the war, his music seemed to be upstaged by the “progressive” style; he had no time for atonalism and the new school of composition of the Second Viennese School, nor for the modernism of Boulez.

However, for the general musical public, the expansion of his coverage on LP, later stereo LP, then CD and finally DVD in outstanding performances by Karajan, Reiner, Solti, Böhm et al kept our allegiance to the composer very much alive, although current critical analysis became less easy to come by. Now this admirable new biography and critical assessment aims to set the record straight. Edited by Charles Youmans, it is compiled from a series of 17 separate essays by distinguished experts in the field (inevitably bringing some duplication of information) divided into three sections – Background, Works and Perspective – plus a chronology of the composer’s life and career, extensive accompanying notes and, of course, an index.

Strauss thought of himself as the last representative of the German musical tradition which began with Mozart and continued with Beethoven and finally (“the high-point”) Wagner. In these pages we follow his career as son of a famous horn player, Franz Strauss (the admirable, Mozartian First Horn Concerto was written with his father in mind), his broader studies at Munich University and then the great influence of Hans von Bülow, who engaged him as assistant conductor. Strauss’s early compositions include an impressive Second Symphony

and for a period he greatly admired Brahms, in particular the Third Symphony, but this admiration was not to last, for he was destined to become a composer of tone-poems and opera.

David Larkin, in considering the first group of symphonic poems, describes *Don Juan* (1889) as “a bolt from heaven – never again did he achieve the same unity of programme, thematic content and formal development”. The sheer swagger of the über-masculine hero is matched in the narrative by the rapturous, post-coital feminine response. Sex had appeared explicitly in music for the first time.

In dealing with the second cycle, James Hepokoski asserts that Strauss’s tone-poems contained the most innovative music of their decade. Their philosophical content drew on Nietzsche’s “Gott ist tot”. Indeed, Nietzsche suggests in *Also sprach Zarathustra* that “we should consider every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh”. *Till Eulenspiegel* also represented a mocking rebellion against established rigidities; *Don Quixote* was a deflated dreamer; *Ein Heldenleben* portrayed the composer himself as a Promethean figure in an everyday world.

In the opera house, Strauss had an inspired partnership with poet and librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal which lasted three decades until the latter’s death in 1929. Their works together are admirably surveyed by Bryan Gilliam: their climax came with the enchanting *Der Rosenkavalier* and the almost equally captivating *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Both reflect Hofmannsthal’s belief that “the miracle of life is that an old love can die while a new one can rise from the ashes”, readily borne out by the close of each work, which sends the audience home happy and satisfied.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter of the book is Walter Werbeck’s essay on the compositional process. Strauss kept a musical notebook in which he recorded the invention of simple thematic ideas, with harmony playing a major role, then to be elaborated into larger complexities. The sketches could later to be linked in a “particell”, essentially a “piano score”, representing the final stage of composition before orchestration, when the composer himself relaxed and enjoyed himself, for the main structural blueprint was then complete. With opera the libretto had to be first studied in depth while drafting the musical ideas. Remarkably, Strauss then wrote the full completed score vertically, a bar at a time in fair copy – only a true genius could manage that! It is fascinating to discover that the engaging duet theme to which Sophie and Octavian depart from the stage at the end of *Der Rosenkavalier* was sketched in Strauss’s notebook long before he composed the opera itself. **Ivan March**

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Musical Journeys

Eilat

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Hidden chamber

Behind unassuming doors, **James Inverne** takes his seat for a festival of unconventional charm



On stage: Yizhar Karshon and Claire Meghnagi

Eilat

Israel and Israelis have always been big on classical music. The saying that Israelis would rather go without lunch than lose their concert tickets obviously doesn't apply to the entire population but there is a sizeable hard core of dedicated music lovers, and the last decade has seen a blossoming in the Israeli music festivals circuit. Where once there were a few, now there are many. To add to stalwarts like the Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival and the vocal festival in the Arab village of Abu Ghosh there are a host of newcomers – among them the Israeli Opera's annual arena-style residency by Mount Masada, Valery Gergiev's Classics at the Red Sea Festival in Eilat and, not to be confused with the latter, the Eilat Chamber Music Festival.

The last of these – this year welcoming Paul McCreech and the Gabrieli Consort, Chloë Hanslip, Maxim Rysanov and Pieter Wispelwey – seems almost incongruous in the Las Vegas-on-sea that Eilat has become. After all, one hardly expects to find a concert of Reger and Ligeti within a hundred miles of a themed hotel entitled Herod's Palace. But then, this year's concert venue is unconventional in itself.

One entered through what looks like a pretty modest cinema multiplex foyer, the scent of warm popcorn in one's nostrils. Yet beyond the food counter, through an innocuous-looking pair of double doors that gave no hint of the jaw-dropping surprise they hid, was a fully fledged concert hall of plush red velvet and some considerable size.

Once over my surprise at the stage boxes and delicate chandeliers, I settled down for cellist Pieter Wispelwey and pianist Paolo Giacometti's concert. Mainly Wispelwey's show, he was at his intelligent best in Bach's Cello Suite No 6, variously long-breathed, urgent, even vertiginous – but all melded together with a wondrous concentration of line. The next morning saw Chloë Hanslip's strobing violin-playing – rhythmic and intense – leading a fine account of Shostakovich's Piano Trio No 2. A traversal of Nino Rota's Fellini film

scores, colourfully played by the festival's student orchestra under the energetic baton of Gisele Ben-Dor, made for a fun late-nighter (only marred by some unfortunate, but actually quite funny, mis-cueing of the accompanying film footage).

Best of all, the Jewish festival of Purim was marked by an unusual celebration – a Venetian masque. A loose yet lovely narrative structure based around different kinds of love traversed traditional Venetian songs and works by Biagio Marini and Bernardo Storace alongside the expected Monteverdi and Vivaldi. A spirit of off-kilter fun pervaded the show, with humour in the shape of harpsichordist Yizhar Karshon ardently bursting into song (after a fashion) in Marini's *La vecchia innamorata* and soprano Yeela Avital's due-any-minute pregnancy amusingly worked into the various relationships depicted. But she and her fellow soprano Claire Meghnagi (dark, focused tone) found repose, languor and reflection aplenty. Top honours, though, go to Avi Avital's supple, thrusting mandolin-playing.

Sadly the concerts were not well attended, though it's not something that unduly worries the festival's general director, music scholar Leonid Rozenberg. "Every concert has to feel special," he says over a lunch at which he hasn't time to eat (the tall and thin Rozenberg seems not to worry about earthly matters like sustenance while he rushes around attending to pressing festival business). "I must do what I believe in rather than just big crowd-pleasers and the audiences who come know they get something unusual, and they know how to listen. It is nice to have a big audience but it is most important to have a good audience." He's right about the quality of punter – a man behind me one night knew Pieter Wispelwey's discography by heart, another engaged me in a detailed conversation about Ligeti, and the schoolchildren at the Venetian masque stayed awake and focused (sadly not always a given with this repertoire and that age group!). And after one concert, I was invited to a party at a place where one can swim with dolphins. You don't get that at Wigmore Hall. 🐬

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MUSICAL JOURNEYS

Valeriy Sokolov:
making friends
in Lebanon



An event for locals that attracts international stars:
Adrian Mourby enjoys the Al Bustan Festival

Beirut

Usually, given how many classical festivals are designed to bring in the tourist dollar, Al Bustan is very much an international festival for locals. "In 1991 there was nothing in this country," says Myrna Bustani, who founded the festival at the end of the Lebanese Civil War. "There were no phones, no electricity and the only time you heard classical music was when somebody important died and they interrupted pop music on the radio." She felt her war-torn country needed a music festival, and she had a ready-made venue: a hotel with its own conference centre up in the hills above Beirut.

Nowadays this five-week festival is the major classical music event in Lebanon, remarkable for the high calibre of its international guest artists. The night I arrived, Lone Madsen was playing Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the Sofia Soloists, a string orchestra from Bulgaria. Coming up was violinist Valeriy Sokolov, who praised the event's atmosphere. "I feel very at home here. The audience are wonderful and it's great to see the festival growing each year. An interesting thing about Al Bustan is that all the musicians stay in the same hotel, which means it's a great chance to meet your colleagues and form friendships with new

people – particularly those from eastern countries who you don't regularly meet in Europe."

Gianluca Marcianò was also on hand, conducting a number of concerts and revelling in his first year as music director. "Gianluca came last year as a guest," recalls Bustani with a laugh. "And after he had looked around, he announced, 'I am your new music director!' I was surprised but very pleased."

The atmosphere in and around the hotel's small concert hall is festive. Conditions are cramped but there are still large works of modern art on display, and buskers in the lobby. The Lebanese do like to party. Inside the auditorium the atmosphere is more restrained, although there was a burst of laughter at the end of Ligeti's *Ramifications* as if some attendees were wondering, "You're kidding, right?"

This year's theme was Music Down the Danube, which was a good enough excuse to bring in musicians from Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine. Bustani gets her artists through personal recommendations from other performers. "The problem is not finding excellent musicians, the problem is saying 'no'." Her ambition is for the festival to break even: "That would be wonderful." For the moment Lebanon's ambitious music festival is the Bustani family's gift to the people. ☺

SIMONGAARE.COM | photo: Dag Myrestrand/BLITZMAP



In frozen Norway, **Andrew Mellor** finds a festival radiating light and warmth

Røros

Little can prepare you for the exceptional beauty of Røros but the journey there comes pretty close. The plush train from Oslo dumps you at Hamar, where you connect with the stopper that heaves its way even more intricately and sluggishly up the final 130 miles of incline to Norway's highest inhabited town. Along the way, the mountains appear ever more expansive and magnificent, the frozen fjords ever wider, whiter and flatter. I can't presume to know anything about your travel entertainment arrangements but the right aural accompaniment can render this a very special musical journey indeed.

Røros itself was built on copper mining; its pit spawned dozens of turf-roofed wooden houses in the 17th century that recently formed the centrepiece of the town's successful bid to become a Unesco World Heritage Site. Not that you'll spot any roof turf if you come here for Vinterfestspill: until mid-Spring the town is piercingly cold and invariably draped in a heavy blanket of snow.

Vinterfestspill warms things up considerably. It's billed as a chamber music festival but you actually get everything from unaccompanied fiddling to sacred works for choir and orchestra. The central venue is Røros's wooden church. At festival time, lights are

directed out of its tall windows from inside, where you can watch specks of snow falling through their luminous beams long after darkness has fallen outside.

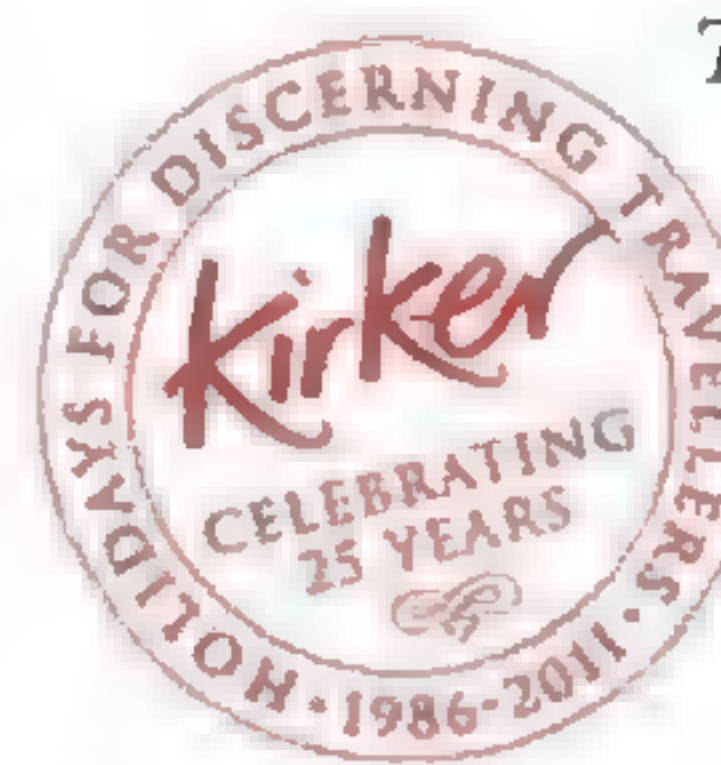
That could appear a gimmick if it weren't for the strength of the accompanying music. A big draw this March was the Norwegian Soloists' Choir, which has itself climbed to staggering heights recently – surely unique in its combination of virtuosity, blend and that distinctly thick but luminous Nordic tone. And how about this for programming: late on the Saturday night, pianist Tor Espen Aspaas played the 19th of Messiaen's *Vingt Regards*, the choir bookending it with a Brahms motet and Xenakis's *Nuit* – segueing from the latter straight into Messiaen's *O sacrum convivium!* without even stopping to tune.

Røros's low temperatures actually create intense warmth; everyone's dressed for the cold and confined to the same modest ladder of streets peppered with glowing bars. It has a musical effect, too. In the creaking town hall the Oslo String Quartet's Grieg had a raw edge that felt so attuned to this place. With them, actress Lise Fjeldstad flung out railing stanzas from Bjørnson's epic poem "Bergliot". Creativity helps make sense of nature at its most beautiful and brutal. There can be few better starting-points for a music festival than that. ☼

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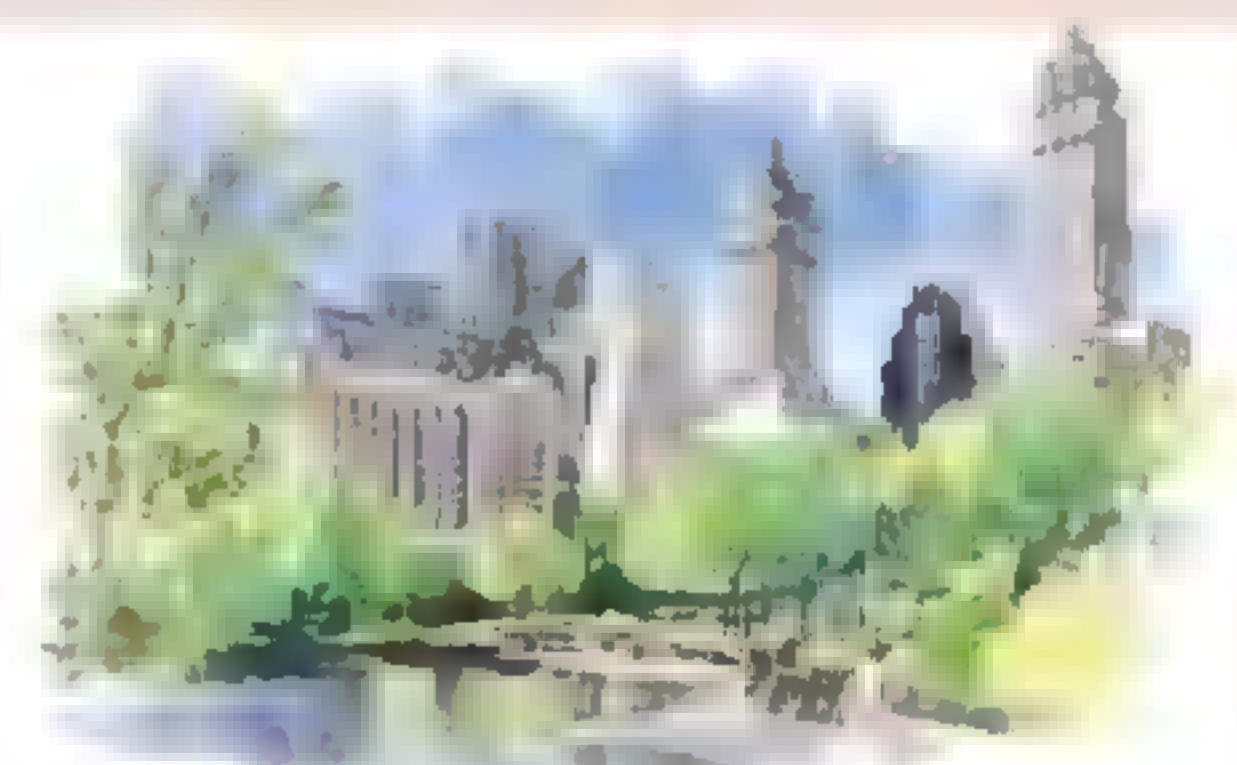
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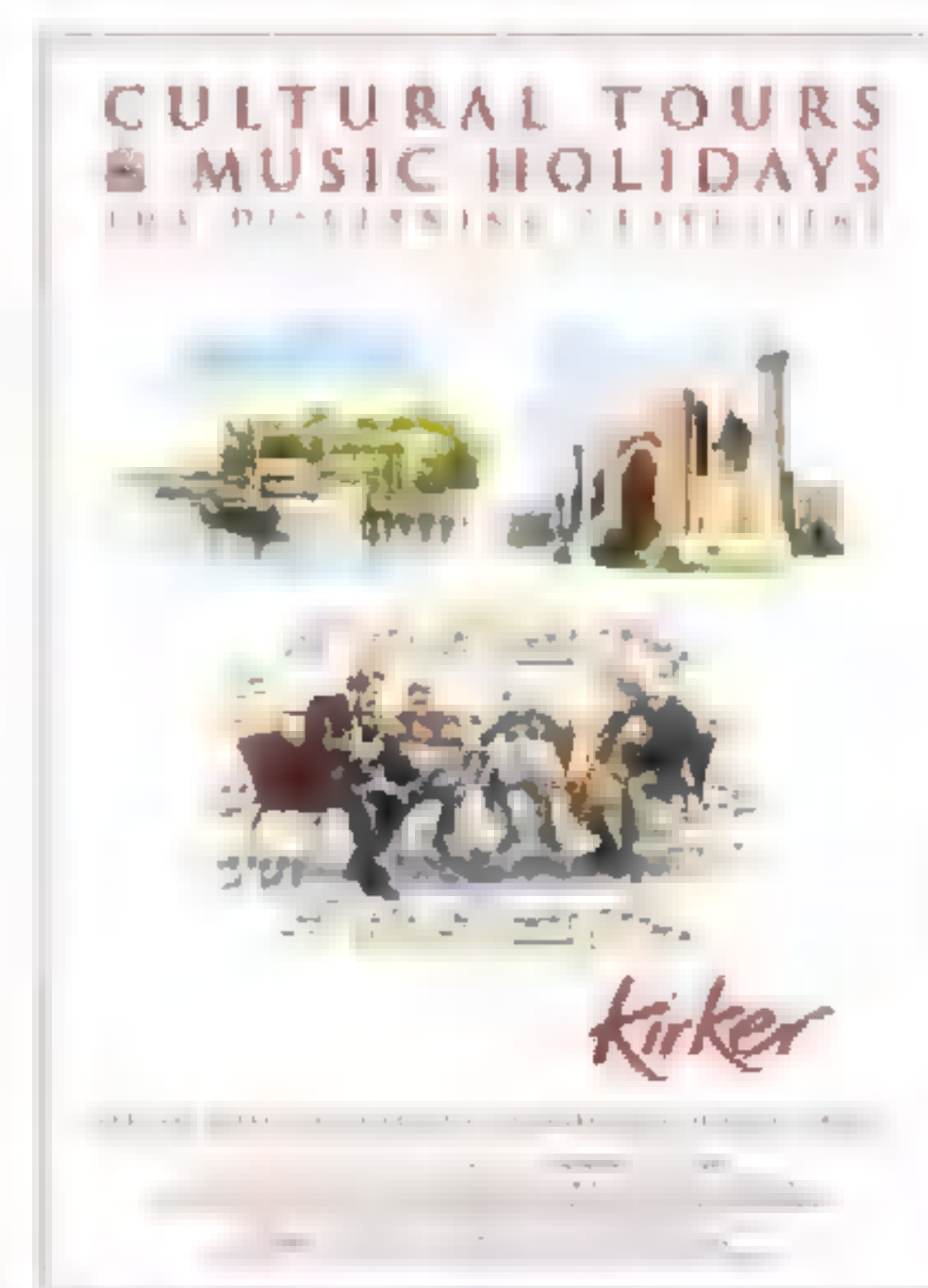
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03
June

St David's Cathedral

The BBC National Orchestra of Wales under Jac van Steen perform Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony, Sibelius's Symphony No 7, and Brahms's Violin Concerto with soloist Isabelle Faust as part of the St David's Cathedral Festival. Details: +44 (0)1437 721 890 /

www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/bbcnow

03
June

Athens Megaron

Nikos Christodoulou conducts the Athens State Orchestra in works by Periklis Koukos, Pancho Vladigerov and Beethoven with piano soloist Lilia Boyadjieva. Details: +30 210 728 2333 /

www.megaron.gr

04
June

Grantham Belton House

The Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra present the popular Belton Spitfire Prom complete with flying display and fireworks. Details: +44 (0)1476 566 116 /

www.nationaltrust.org.uk



05
June

Glasgow St Mary's Cathedral

Members of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conclude their chamber music series with Mendelssohn's String Quartet No 6, Beethoven's Sextet for Two Horns and String Quartet, and Brahms's String Quintet No 1. Details: +44 (0)141 353 8000 /

www.glasgowconcerthalls.com

08
June

New York Church of Ascension

Dennis Keene conducts the Voices of Ascension Choir in "Pipes and Voices", a programme including Kodály's *Missa Brevis*, Parry's *I Was Glad* and the world premiere of Chiayu's *Five Essences*, performed on the new Manton Memorial Organ. Details: +1 212 358 7060 /

www.voicesofascension.org

09
June

Gateshead Sage

The Northern Sinfonia conducted by Kristjan Järvi perform Stravinsky's *Jeu de cartes*, Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Kai* with cello soloist Louisa Tuck, and Strauss's *Divertimento*. Details: +44 (0)191 443 4661 /

www.thesagegateshead.org

09
June

Toronto Roy Thomson Hall

Peter Oundjian conducts the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso*, Debussy's *La mer*, and Rachmaninov's *The Sea and the Gulls* and Piano Concerto No 3 with soloist Yuja Wang on June 9 and 11. Details: +1 416 598 3375 /

www.tso.ca

10
June

Warsaw Philharmonic Hall

The Warsaw Boys' Choir join the Warsaw Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra to perform Mahler's Symphony No 3 under conductor Antoni Wit. Details: +48 22 55 17 130 /

www.filharmonia.pl

11
June

Kansas Volland Fix Pasture

The Kansas City Symphony under Steven Jarvi present the sixth annual concert of Symphony in the Flint Hills, combining music and outdoor activities in wild prairieland. +1 816 471 0400 /

www.symphonyintheflinthills.org

13
June

Krakow Philharmonic Hall

Jiří Bělohlávek conducts the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in Ančerl's Sinfonietta and Mahler's Symphony No 5 as part of the Gustav Mahler Festival, from May 10 to June 19 in Krakow. Details: +48 12 619 87 33 /

www.filharmonia.krakow.pl

16
June

San Francisco Symphony Hall

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* Act 3, and Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances* and Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Yuja Wang from June 16 to 19. Details: +1 415 864 6000 /

www.sfsymphony.org

17
June

London Kew Music Festival

The Kew Music Festival runs from June 17 to 26 with appearances from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the James Pearson Trio and

pianist Lucy Parham. Details: +44 (0)7771 565 140 /

www.kewmusicfestival.com

17
June

Oxford Sheldonian Theatre

Paul Lewis performs a Schubert recital featuring 12 Waltzes, D145; Four Impromptus, D899; *Hungarian Melody*, D817 and Sonata No 18. Details: +44 (0)1865 244806 /

www.musicatoxford.com

17
June

Adelaide Town Hall

The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and Arvo Volmer perform Carl Vine's *MicroSymphony*, Shostakovich's First Symphony and Brahms's Violin Concerto with soloist Tasmin Little. Details: +61 8 8233 6200 /

www.aso.com.au

18
June

Huddersfield Town Hall

Martyn Brabbins conducts the Hallé and Huddersfield Choral Society in Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with soloists Christine Rice, Christopher Purves, and Kim Begley as Gerontius. Details: +44 (0)1484 223 200 /

www.halle.co.uk

19
June

London Handel House

Violinists Madeleine Easton and Jane Gordon, cellist Nicholas Stringfellow and harpsichordist Nicholas Jackson join the Concertante of London to perform works by Bach, Handel and Vivaldi. Details: +44 (0)20 7399 1953 /

www.handelhouse.org

23
June

Seoul Arts Centre

Ludovic Morlot conducts the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra in Ibert's *Escales*, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Manoury's violin concerto *Synapse* with soloist Hae-Sun Kang. Details: +82 2 1588 1210 /

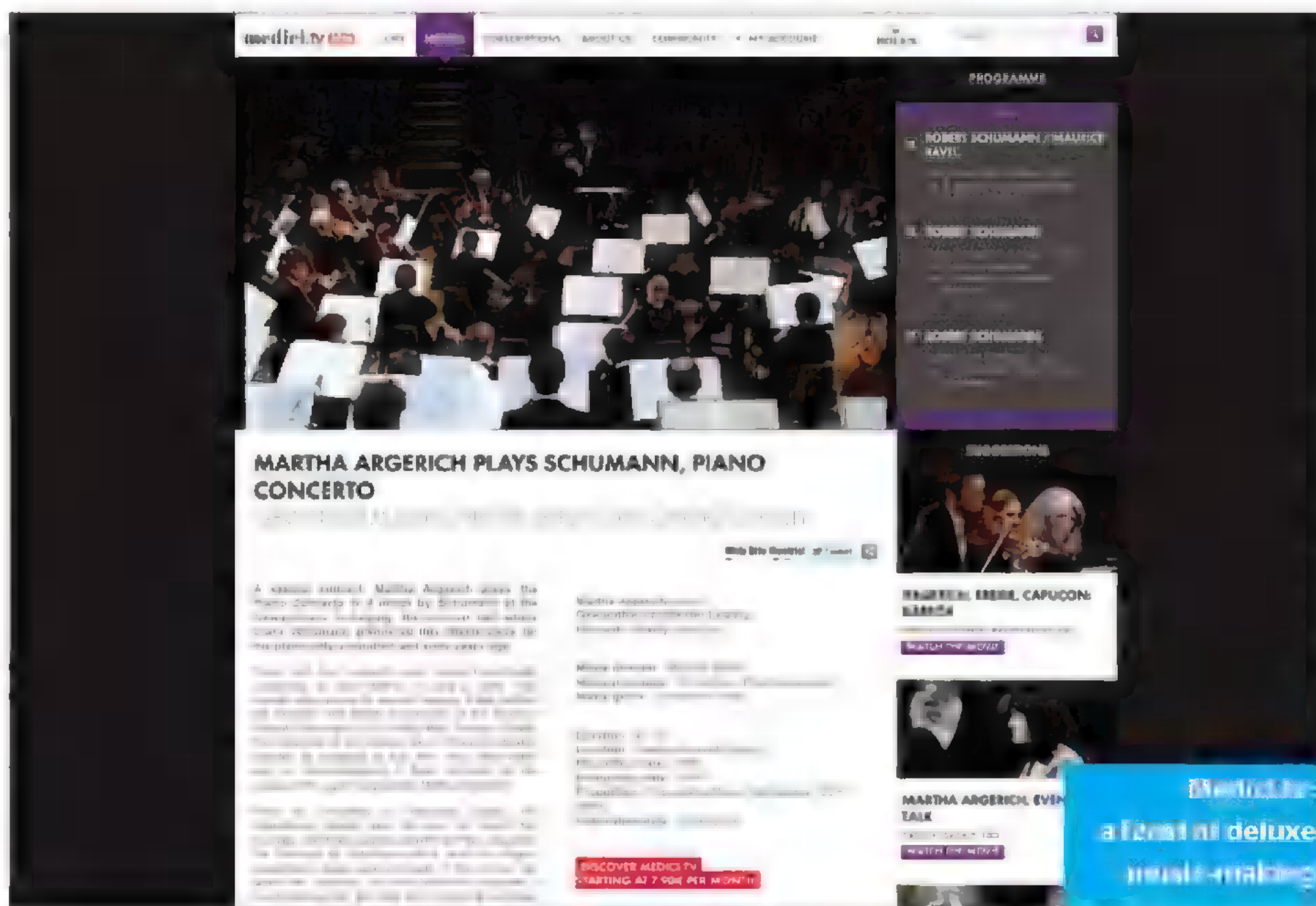
www.seoulphil.or.kr



Arvo Volmer conducts Australia's Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

Tune Surfing

James Jolly on medici.tv's newly revamped site and the start of a Beethoven pilgrimage



After a particularly hard day's work when I didn't venture out of my house, I set to wondering how long one could survive without ever setting foot outdoors. Food and drink would clearly not be a problem with the plethora of home-delivery services, music is easily taken care of and if you craved the visual experience of a concert, that's now getting easier by the day. The Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall has become a regular fixture in my musical diary – in fact, I seem to be spending more time in this stunningly presented cyber-concert hall than in the genuine items on my doorstep in London.

Now a relaunched site, **medici.tv**, allows one to fill in the gaps when there's no live event from Berlin (or if I feel like something that's not an orchestral concert).

Medici.tv has recently had a face-lift and a change of ownership, and now, under the guidance of industry veteran Hervé Boissière, offers a feast of music and music-making from some of the more "luxe" venues: Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Paris's Cité de la Musique, Vienna's Musikverein, La Scala, the Verbier Festival, Glyndebourne and so on. And naturally, given the prestige of these spaces, the artists are pretty impressive too: Martha

Argerich, Gustavo Dudamel, Lang Lang, Daniel Barenboim, Mariss Jansons et al.

The offering is a mixture of live performances, archived concerts and operas, and hundreds of hours of film available "on demand". The quality is generally very good and the filming skilfully handled, though the on-demand material varies with its age. I found that I needed a fairly robust broadband connection for best effect but, once "airborne", there were treasures aplenty.

Lang Lang is always a charismatic performer and, while you occasionally want to whisper quietly in his ear that "less is more", there's no denying the enthusiasm he exudes for the music he plays. The latest live event on Medici, as I write, is a recital-interview from Cité de la Musique which includes piano pieces by Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, Schumann and a couple of Chinese composers (of a decidedly "school of Debussy" bent). Lang Lang is interviewed onstage and his answers (in English) are translated into French.

Still with the piano, there's a wonderful recital given by the seemingly indestructible Menahem Pressler (founding member of the Beaux Arts Trio). He plays Beethoven's Op 110 Piano Sonata, some Chopin Mazurkas, Debussy's *Estampes* and Schubert's B flat Sonata – quite a programme for a man a couple of years short of his 90th birthday. And the twinkle in his eye is delightful – a real treat! Elsewhere on the site there's a performance of Mozart's K453 Piano Concerto with Pressler, the Verbier Festival Orchestra and Daniel Harding.

One of the ensembles which has partnered with Medici is the Philharmonic Orchestra of La Scala (ie the opera orchestra out of the pit). I watched a fascinating performance of Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto with Robert Levin at the piano and Semyon Bychkov conducting. Levin, one of the most inspired and inspiring practitioners of classical repertoire on the fortepiano, here plays a modern Steinway but the insights he brings are wonderful. And Semyon Bychkov draws some thrilling playing from the orchestra.

In operatic mode, Medici offers a handful of productions from the Opéra National de Paris including a lovely performance of Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen* from the Bastille Opéra (the production is by André Engel and Don Kent films it all very sensitively). Dennis Russell Davies conducts and my only criticism with Medici's presentation is that it's virtually

The essential download playlist No 42 Igor Stravinsky

April 6 marked the 40th anniversary of the death of Igor Stravinsky, in my humble opinion, the greatest composer of the 20th century. Here's a selection of his masterpieces to listen to.

The Firebird **Concertgebouw / Colin Davis** (Philips) A, Am, IT

Petrushka **LSO / Claudio Abbado** (DG) A, Am, IT, DG, S

Le roi des étoiles **Cleveland Chor and Orch / Pierre Boulez** (DG) A, Am, IT, DG, S

The Rite of Spring **Cleveland Orch / Riccardo Chailly** (Decca) A, Am, IT, DG, S

Symphonies – Psalms; Three Movements; C **BPO / Simon Rattle** (EMI) A, Am, IT

Oedipus Rex **Soloists; Swedish RSO / Esa-Pekka Salonen** (Sony) A, Am, IT, S

Pulcinella **Soloists; LSO / Claudio Abbado** (DG) A, Am, IT, DG, S

Apollon musagète **BPO / Herbert von Karajan** (DG) A, Am, IT, DG, S

The Rake's Progress **London Sinf / Riccardo Chailly** (Decca) A, Am, IT, DG, S

A = Ariana (US only) Am = Amazon IT = iTunes S = Spotify (available in selected territories)



impossible to find out who's singing. That said, the internal navigation is excellent and you can jump to individual numbers very easily.

In the movie section, I watched a wonderful concert from Lucerne with Abbado conducting and Renée Fleming singing Berg's *Altenberg-Lieder* with lustrous tone. The concert also contains a reading of Mahler's Seventh that has gone straight on to my "to listen to" list (it dates from 2005).

There's quite a lot of the Medici site to watch and listen to for free. Pay a monthly fee of €7.90 (€79 annually) and you also get unlimited access to the back catalogue. Pay €12.90 (or €129 annually) and you get enhanced video and audio quality, and you can access everything from your mobile should you feel the need for *Má vlast* as you travel to work (there's a fine Harnoncourt/Royal Concertgebouw performance available).

A wonderful and wonderfully ambitious project has just been launched by the young Elias Quartet, a truly in-depth approach to the complete Beethoven string quartets. The Elias are performing all 17 quartets over the course of the next few years and, via the wonders of the internet, are sharing the experience with anyone who wants to join them. Their website (thebeethovenproject.com) contains blogs, recordings, video footage, scholarly articles (such as the thorny question of Beethoven's tempi), interviews and so on. I've never subscribed to the school of thought that you have to have a lifetime's experience to play this music – after all, everyone has to start somewhere, and the earlier you start, the longer your journey will be. Judging by a lovely performance of the slow movement of Op 18 No 1 (courtesy of BBC Radio 3), they are wonderfully lyrical players. There are little video messages from the members of the quartet in which they talk about their individual responses to this music – and, in interactive mode, they offer visitors to the site the opportunity to add their thoughts about Beethoven. It's a splendid venture, generously sponsored by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, a great supporter of classical music to whom we're all indebted. 

BLOGWATCH

kennethwoods.net/blog1

Conductor Kenneth Woods strives for perfection in his art



Kenneth Woods, principal guest conductor of the Orchestra of the Swan (their world-premiere recording of Hans Gál's Symphony No 3 is issued by Avie in June), ponders perfection.

Perfection.

It's a powerful word. Can it apply to music? Should it? Even when it does, is it the point? Is perfect music inherently better music? I don't think a performance can be perfect. Technically flawless – yes. Magical – yes. Perfect? No. All too often, the price for technical accuracy is too high. A Coke can is, in a technical sense, perfect – flawlessly engineered and manufactured – but it's not all that interesting. Performance needs risk, and risk sooner or later leads to mistakes. That's the price we all live with for great music-making.

A creative work, however, can be perfect. For my money, Brahms is a pretty consistently perfect composer. I suppose not everyone agrees. I remember a friend in college, a young composer possessed of the certainty of youth, who said, "Brahms is a terrible orchestrator. Maybe the worst ever. Everything is so dark and dull – he just didn't know how to use percussion. A real orchestrator would have used timbres like glockenspiel to double those endless violin melodies and give them some sparkle."

The mind reels at the idea of the theme of the finale in Brahms's First Symphony doubled

with glockenspiel. I think his orchestration is, well, pretty damn perfect.

Brahms...He never wrote (or at least never published) a bad, uneven or unfinished piece. The early pieces don't sound like he has anything left to do to become Brahms and the late ones don't sound like he's running out of gas. You never find a passage that seems a little short on inspiration or a little weak on craft. Pretty much everything he wrote strikes a flawless balance between emotional engagement and intellectual rigor. You feel like the artistic personality is absolutely defined but not limited. The four symphonies are, beginning to end, like so much else he wrote, pretty much perfect works.

Actually, there are quite a few perfect pieces of music. Mozart's Symphony No 40 is a perfect piece. Beethoven's Seventh is perfect. Mahler's Sixth? Perfect. Bach wrote an awful lot of perfect music. Haydn may have written even more.

But is that the point? Mozart's 41st is not perfect – the seams do show in places. There are predictable moments and moments that sound less than inspired. In spite of this, it is arguably an even greater work than the perfect 40th. Beethoven's Third is not perfect – the piece is and always will be top-heavy, with the third and fourth movements bound to feel somehow like a let-down after the first two. Is it a lesser work than the Seventh? I don't think so.

The Gramophone Player

Gramophone's online media Player features a huge amount of music for you to stream, including longer excerpts from the monthly Editor's Choice recordings, in-vision excerpts of DVD recommendations, works related to one of the magazine's features and a newly remastered recording from the archives – and all for free! www.gramophone.co.uk



High Fidelity

News and reviews of the latest in audio, home cinema and new technology

Cyrus launches three-strong streaming audio range

British company Cyrus has become the latest to join the streaming audio fray, with a line-up of three models including a £1600 all-in-one system. All three models are controlled by a new n-remote handset, which has a colour screen for easy navigation of music libraries, and can also be programmed to operate other devices.

The Streamline system combines streaming with a newly-designed preamp and a 30W per channel stereo amplifier. As well as USB and iPod connectivity it also has five further inputs for the connection of other digital components.

The flagship model in the range is the £2000 Stream XP, which has a built-in preamplifier and a choice of fixed or variable line outputs. Designed to form the core of a new high-performance system, according to Cyrus, the Stream XP uses upsampling 192kHz/24-bit



digital to analogue conversion, and shares with the other new units the TuneIn radio platform from Radiotime, allowing up to 30,000 internet radio stations to be accessed.

The other "component" streamer in the range is the £1400 Stream X, which is based on the XP, but lacks the top-end model's digital-to-analogue conversion and preamplifier. It's designed for use with standalone DACs or the company's integrated amplifiers and preamplifiers fitted with their optional DAC module, and like the other models in the range will handle WAV, FLAC, AAC, MP3 and AIFF audio files up to 24-bit/96kHz resolution.

Cyrus

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www.cyrusaudio.com

KEF upgrades its wireless speaker system

KEF has launched a Mk2 version of its wireless transmission system, designed to be used in home cinema and stereo systems.

Selling for £450, the KEF Universal Wireless System 2.0 comprises a transmitter and two receiver/amplifiers, and can be used to make the rear speakers in a surround system wireless, or simply deliver music around the house without cabling.

The new version has a more powerful transmitter, operating over a narrow signal band to avoid interference from mobile phones and domestic appliances, and employing Advanced Frequency Hopping Spread Spectrum technology to ensure a clear signal.

Each receiver module contains a 50W mono amplifier, and KEF points out that two systems can be used together for expansion to wireless operation of all four rear channels in a 7.1-channel surround system.

KEF

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COMING SOON

MUSICAL FIDELITY SET TO EXPAND STREAMING RANGE

Hot on the heels of its M1 CLiC streaming device, due in the shops soon, Musical Fidelity is promising a range of components designed to make more of digital music stored on computers and similar devices. The company tells us that a matching amplifier in the compact half-width M1 series is on the way, together with at least one more digital to analogue converter - probably in the V Series - to run alongside its existing range of full-size amplifiers and other components.

MORE HOMES TO GET FASTER BROADBAND

With the availability of ever-larger downloads of both music and video material, some users will find that a major bottleneck to downloading or streaming content is their home broadband speed. Virgin has announced that its 100Mb broadband service is now available to a million UK homes, and that it plans to complete the roll-out of the service across the UK by the middle of next year. The 100Mb service costs £35 per month as part of a TV/internet/phone package, or £45 as a standalone service.

Neat adds compact model to Ultimatum range

Neat Acoustics' Ultimatum XLS, at around £6000 depending on finish, is described as "a stand mounting



loudspeaker delivering the bass weight, scale and dynamics of a significantly sized floorstander".

Two 16.8cm mid/bass drivers are mounted isobarically, with a modified 26mm SEAS XL Sonomex domed tweeter mounted in its own sub-chamber. A further internal chamber houses the two upward-firing super HF drivers.

The cabinet stands 38cm tall, and is available in a range of wood veneers and piano lacquers.

Neat Acoustics

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

The future of CDs in the download age

A lot of attention is being given to downloadable and streaming music, but the CD isn't going anywhere any time soon, says **Andrew Everard**

These days I find I'm increasingly being asked whether it's worth buying CDs any more. After all, a wide variety of music is available online, either in the form of streaming services or as downloads, and just about every company worth its salt now has a streaming music solution.

Regular readers will remember that some 18 months back Linn announced it was to cease the manufacture of CD players and concentrate its efforts on streaming music solutions. The headlines at the time screamed of the beginning of the end of the CD, although that's not at all what Linn said.

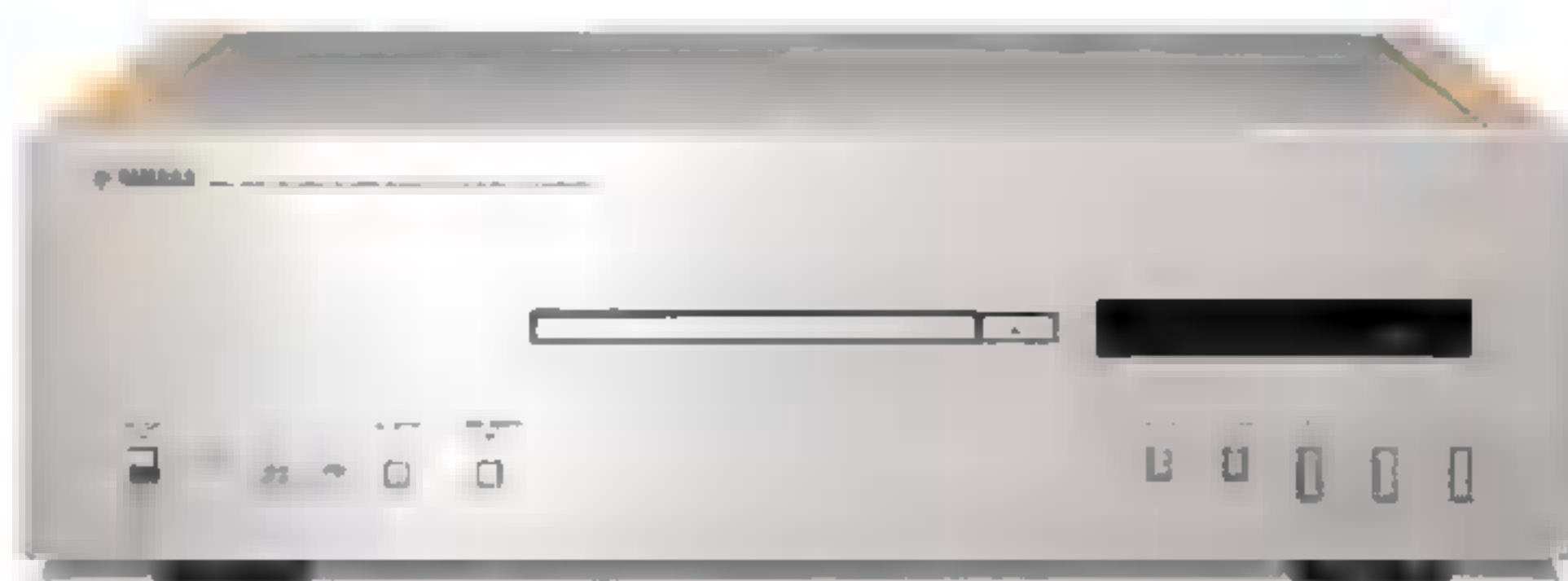
Indeed, the head of the company said at the time that he would continue to buy CDs – it's just that he'd rip them at high quality on to his Linn system and play them that way. Linn Records continues to sell music on physical media, as SACD/CD hybrids in most cases – and of course other brands continue to launch and sell CD players.

Yes, official figures show overall sales of CDs in the UK are down and the troubles of major retailers such as Woolworths, Zavvi and HMV in recent times have had an effect, especially in the pop sector of the market. However sales of "albums" – whether as full length CDs or digital downloads – have fallen as a whole: the latest figures show a 7 per cent drop year on year, to just under 120m units.

Of those, though, only 21m are digital downloads, with the rest accounted for by CDs. Yes, CD sales fell by more than 12.4 per cent in 2010 compared with 2009, but CDs still outsell downloads four to one. By comparison, the sales in the "singles" chart are split rather less equally: 98 per cent of sales are downloads and only 2 per cent physical singles.

The classical music industry has embraced the digital arena to impressive effect, with online retailers and record labels offering their own download services. These aren't just at reduced-data MP3 quality: some offer CD-quality FLAC downloads, while a few take it further into higher-resolution files: have a look at sites such as Linn Records or The Naim Label, B&W's Society of Sound or specialist high-resolution site HDTracks.

Just recently, for example, Hyperion announced the availability of its *Complete*



Liszt Piano Music box-set as a download: with online discounts, downloading saves £100 on the price of the 99-disc physical package, in both MP3 and lossless FLAC formats.

However, there is a slight hitch, and it's something to which I alluded when I covered the download release on the *Gramophone* website: the MP3 set is something like 12GB, the "full-fat" FLAC version a massive 26GB.

Therein is the problem: such downloads are huge, time-consuming on all but the fastest broadband internet connections, and will probably challenge the monthly download limits of those on "capped" broadband deals.

At the moment, with a relatively fast internet connection at home, it still takes forever to download music: it's usually something I leave running overnight for really big downloads, in the hope that it'll be done in the morning. A rough figure from an online download calculator suggests that Hyperion set would take me around 36 hours.

Yes, there are faster broadband services on offer and, as mentioned opposite in the *Coming Soon* column, Virgin Media is hoping to roll out its fibre-optic 100Mb service across the whole of the UK by the middle of 2012. This will at last give us the kind of speeds common in some other parts of the world.

However, you do need to be in an area served by Virgin cable, and the service isn't exactly cheap: having checked the other day whether I could get 100Mb, I was a little alarmed to discover that the broadband service alone would cost me £45 a month. That's a fairly serious investment to make for the ability to download music in a sensible time, especially when there are endless offers of sufficient speeds for the rest of my needs for much less.

£500 a year buys a lot of CDs: that, plus a huge installed base of CD-playing hardware and the fact that many manufacturers continue to launch new players – both entry-level and, as with the Yamaha illustrated, high end – suggests the silver disc will be with us for a good while to come. ■

Infidelities Andrew Everard

Digits really aren't just digits, after all

Featured in this month's review pages is Naim's long-awaited NDX network music player, which has certainly lived up to the company's hard-won reputation of announcing a product, then keeping us waiting while all the bugs are worked out.

As you'll read in the next few pages, I was rather taken with the NDX, but I can already sense the howls of indignation from listeners convinced that a reasonable MP3 bitrate is more than good enough for music listening, and everything else is just froth and assumption, rather than actual improvement.

We're at a fairly early stage of the development of computer-based music in the home: yes, there have been players for years, but it's only recently that such products have become a) mainstream and b) desirable, for a whole range of reasons.

What has surprised me most while living with this wonderful (but admittedly rather expensive) music streaming client is not just how good it can sound with high-bitrate music, but what it manages to do with a wide range of lower-resolution content, from heavily data-reduced MP3 rips to low-bitrate streaming radio stations.

It seems a lot of this is to do with what a device does with the digits once it has them, and not entirely about the digits themselves: by putting a lot of work into the quality of its handling of data, and the way it's converted into analogue audio, the NDX makes an even more solid case for the future of music delivered this way, whether it's stored on a local hard disk or streamed directly into the home.

Now all we need is the bandwidth...

Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

'The NDX makes a solid case for music on hard disk or streamed'



NAIM HDX

High-end network player more than justifies its price

The 'digits is digits' brigade won't be happy but Naim's new streaming client is sensational, says **Andrew Everard**

So you thought the arguments about cables, CD players and amplifiers were bad? Well, spend a bit of time on the various hi-fi and audio internet forums – I know, but you have to admit they hold a certain morbid fascination! – and you'll find just as much friction between those advocating ripping your entire music collection to a hard disk and playing it via a streaming device.

There are those who'll tell you that all you really need is an iPod plugged into a pair of active speakers, and however much more you spend you won't get a better sound. To demonstrate that such thinking is wide of the mark, I held off from going down the computer audio route for a long time, waiting until I found the sound quality on offer was at least on a par with that of a decent CD player. Now I have in my system a player able to move performance a good way on from that, to a level matching the very best of CD hardware and – when fed with audio files of a resolution beyond that available on CD – comfortably bettering what one can achieve with the familiar silver disc.

I'll get the painful part out of the way first: the Naim NDX is £2995 as tested here, or £3250 when fitted with an optional DAB/FM radio tuner module to supplement the internet radio capability of the standard model. That makes it comfortably the most expensive streaming client of its kind on the market – and it *is* just a player, needing to be used with an amplifier and speakers, although it does have digital inputs to which other



source components can be connected. What we have here is a streaming client, able to access a network either using wireless (Wi-Fi) or wired (Ethernet) connection, and with a variety of additional inputs. There are three on the rear panel, one each on optical, phono electrical and BNC electrical, and a fourth in the form of a front-panel USB socket. To this last can be connected USB "thumb-drives" or Apple iPod/iPhone/iPad devices, from which the NDX will take music in its digital form, bypassing the digital-to-analogue conversion in the portable players.

Outputs are provided on conventional stereo phonos and Naim's usual locking DIN socket, and there's also a digital output, again on a BNC connector, while an upgrade path is provided once a "link plug" is removed: Naim's XPS or 555PS power supplies can then be added for even better performance.

Other connectivity extends to an RS232 serial connection, used for future upgrades, and 3.5mm mini-jack sockets for remote control input and output: Naim has built a high degree of system automation into the NDX and, as well as controlling many of the company's pre-amplifiers, integrated amps and CD players, the NDX can also

THE TEST MUSIC



ELGAR

Enigma Variations
LSO / Sir Colin Davis
LSO Live (M) LSO0109
Downloaded from B&W's

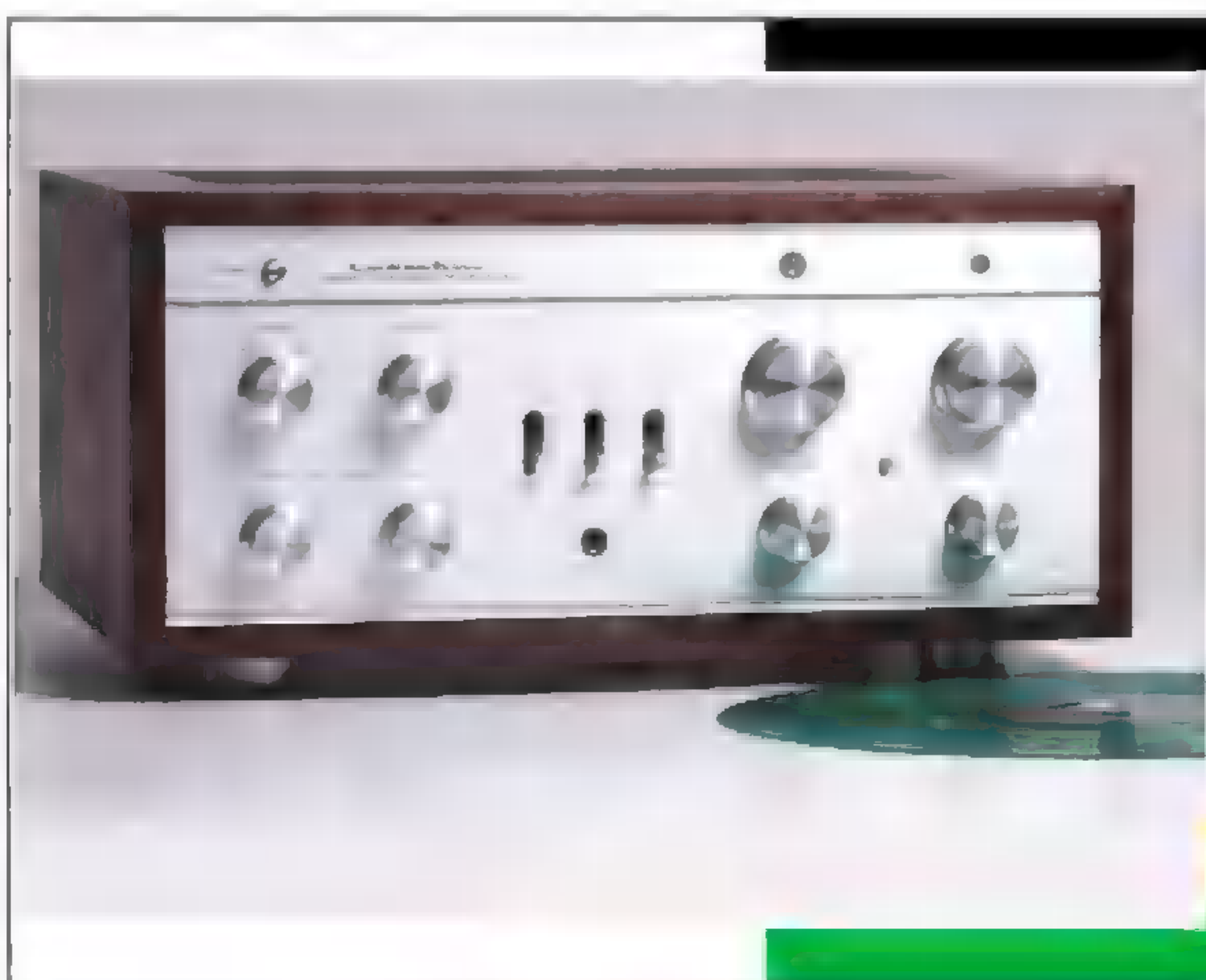
Society of Sound, this massively dynamic recording sounds magnificent on the Naim.

be programmed to handle major functions of other products conforming to the RC-5 remote control protocols.

Talking of remote control, the NDX comes with its own handset, or can be "driven" from an Apple iPod, iPhone or iPad, using the app available from the iTunes Store. As well as the version of the n-Stream app available for the iPod/iPhone, I also had a beta version of the iPad app to try and this features much-improved graphics – not to mention my being able to use it without reading glasses!

The NDX draws on the design of Naim's standalone digital-to-analogue converter, the Naim DAC. SHARC DSP-based buffering is used with fixed clocks, which serves to isolate the digital conversion from jitter in the incoming signal. Also implemented in DSP is the 16-time oversampling digital filter, which feeds the Burr Brown PCM1791A converter, at a maximum sample rate of 768kHz.

At the moment, that enables the NDX to handle most of the popular audio codecs – though Apple Lossless fans have to stick to playing tracks digitally from an Apple portable device, rather than streaming – at sample rates and resolutions up to 24-bit/96kHz. The Naim also offers full



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gapless playback, so there are no nasty breaks when works are split over multiple “tracks”.

The sections of the NDX are separated using galvanic isolation, minimising noise transfer to the analogue outputs, and there are separate transformer windings and power supplies for each part of the player.

PERFORMANCE

The NDX I received for review had been run for a considerable amount of time, and was thus ready to use almost “straight from the box”. I slotted it into a system using Naim Supernait/HiCap amplification and my usual PMC OB1 speakers, and after only a short period of set-up, which involved configuring the analogue and digital output selections, selecting the automation for the Supernait – very simple, by the way – and connecting the NDX to my home network, all was ready.

Looking back through my calendar, I note that the launch of the NDX was held on September 1 last year at Naim HQ in Salisbury, and the “within weeks” promise for samples gradually stretched into months – I finally got the review unit in March. Was the wait worthwhile? Absolutely: the Naim sounds quite unlike any other streaming client I have yet heard.

In very simple terms, it doesn’t give away any clue that the music being played is delivered from a computer hard drive, over a network and out through the player: fed with files at CD quality, it is more than a match for almost any CD player on the market, while stepping up to high-resolution downloads such as those from Naim’s own label, Linn Records or the likes of 2L sees the NDX showing the best of CD a clean pair of heels.

There’s a magnificent sense of body, of three-dimensionality, to music played via the NDX: orchestral percussion has both slam and weight; strings and woodwind are handled with the most delicious sense of the instruments’ character, and the rasp of a brass section is nothing short of gorgeous.

The ridiculous thing is, I found myself consistently listening at a higher volume than usual, drinking in the levels of detail available and enjoying the stress-free sound on offer. There are no crushed dynamics, no sense of character being imposed on the music, but rather just sheer enjoyment.

I’m going to stick my neck out here and say the NDX is the best digital music player I’ve had through my system in my many years of reviewing – and just as I started typing this sentence the drums, brass and skittering strings of Elgar’s seventh *Enigma* Variation came pouring out of the speakers and raised it even further in my estimation. Indeed, I can’t remember when I had quite so much fun reviewing an audio component, to the extent that I’ve been supplementing the classical diet with (whisper it) some high-resolution rock recordings and finding the NDX every bit as impressive.

Every single recording I have played through this new Naim unit has surprised me with just how much it has to offer, and I haven’t been disappointed once by the musical experience. The NDX is the most exciting thing I have encountered in audio for a very long time and – even if it were on those grounds alone – that ensures it is worthy of absolute, unqualified recommendation. **D**

NAIM NDX

Type Network music player

Price £2995 (£3250 with DAB/FM tuner module)

Inputs Wi-Fi, Ethernet, two optical and one electrical digital, USB (+ connection for radio antenna when DAB/FM module fitted)

Outputs Stereo audio on RCA phono and DIN sockets, electrical digital

Other connections RS232, remote control in, two remote control out

Accessories supplied Remote control handset, Wi-Fi antenna

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A closer look at, and listen to, some recent high-definition recordings



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The performances are remarkable, but even more striking is the demonstration-quality recording, which gives one of the most natural surround effects ever heard on SACD. This is “Prof” Johnson’s first SACD surround recording, in association with producer David Frost, and there’s a wonderful sense of space, plus a jaw-dropping dynamic range.



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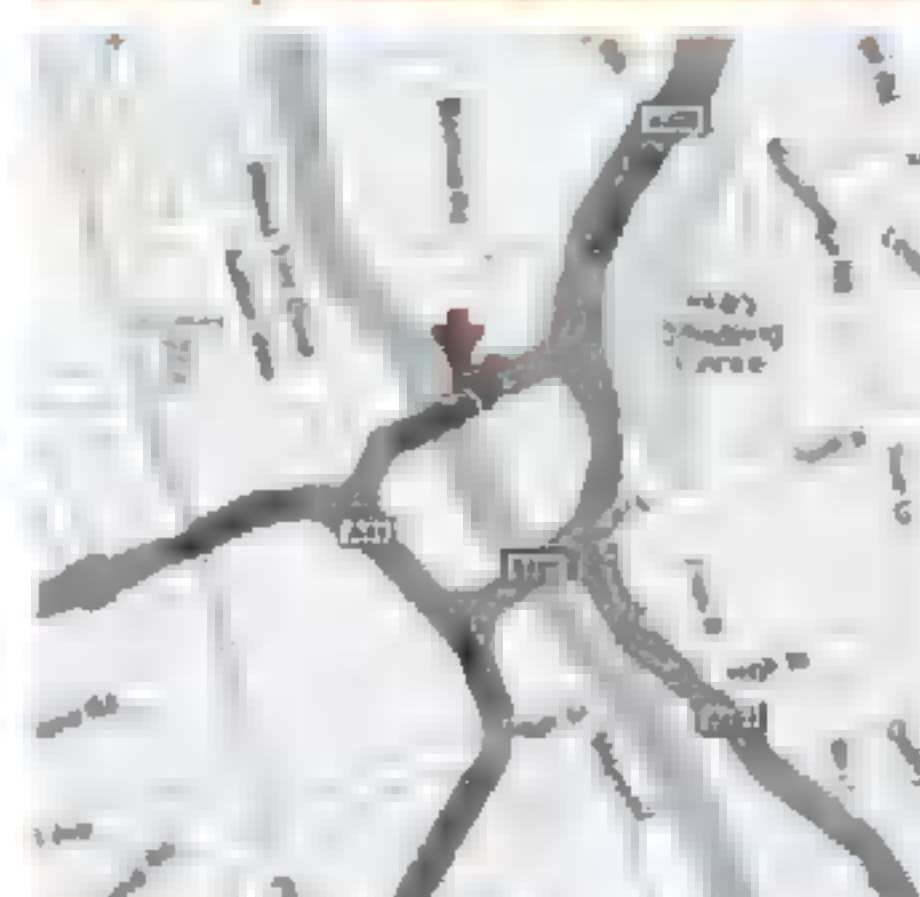
Linn Ⓢ ② CKD366

Solo violin isn’t the most obvious candidate for a surround recording but doubts are soon dispelled when listening to this lovingly recorded two-disc set. The sheer amount of detail available on the SACD layer allows one to look deeper into the music and the quality of the performance.

The surround sound simply adds a sense of ambience around the instrument and the listener. It’s an extremely subtle effect, adding to rather than detracting from the performance, and it puts another Linn recording firmly on the demo-quality list.



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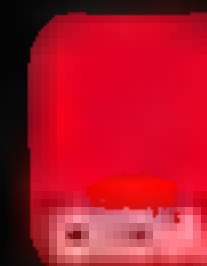
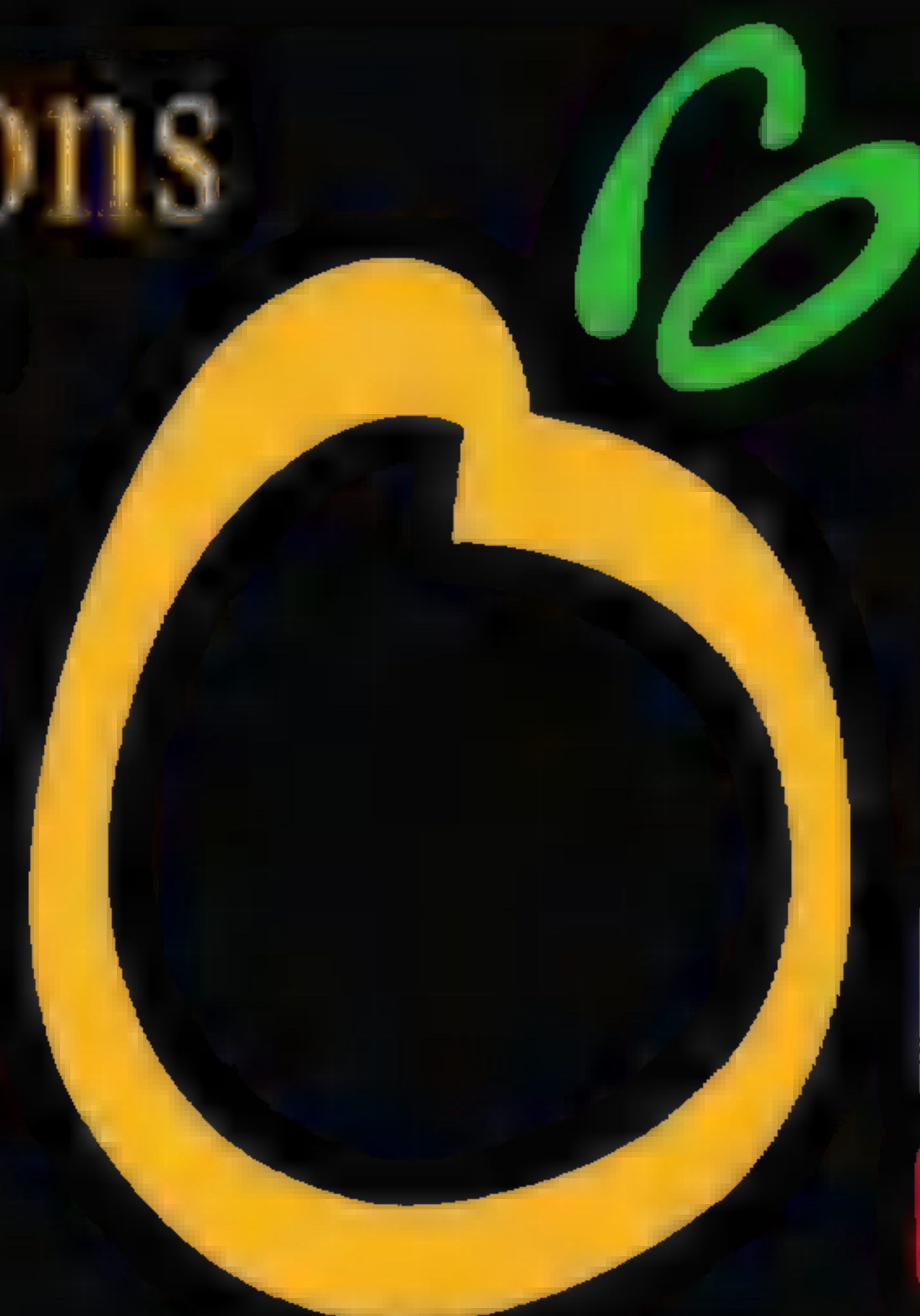
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EPOS EPIC1

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The smallest model in a new range from the British speaker brand has **James Vesey** liking what he hears

The Epos speaker brand has been with us for many years now, and has justifiably gained itself a reputation for combining fine sound and value for money.

Founded in 1983, the brand has been through several sets of hands, and in 1999 was bought by Mike Creek, who'd worked with the Epos speakers for a while in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Epic, its latest range, comprises three models: the Epic 1 "bookshelf" model we have here, the larger Epic 2 standmounter, and the Epic 3 floorstanding design.

The speakers have a highly innovative design. In place of the conventional front baffle onto which speaker grilles can be clipped, leaving fixing points visible when it's removed, there's a sub-baffle sitting flush with the edges of the enclosure.

This can be removed by pushing a special tool, provided with the speakers, through a hole in the rear of the cabinet. With this off, the grilles can now be fitted, and they too

fit flush with the cabinet edges, giving the speakers a pleasingly "finished" look whether used grilles-on or "naked". However, the changes here are more than just cosmetic: Epos says the new models "bear little similarity to earlier models", and that this "more sensitive and bolder sounding speaker range...redefines the benchmark for what can be achieved with modern materials and computer-aided design."

New drive units are used throughout, the £325/pr Epic 1 having a 25mm soft-dome tweeter and 15cm polypropylene-cone mid/bass unit. The speaker is compact, at just 31cm tall, and is designed to be used close to a rear wall, with just 10cm minimum clearance. That makes it a true bookshelf, in that you could actually use it on bookshelves without compromising performance.

The speakers are finished in a vinyl wrap – cherry or black ash – over 18mm MDF, and the quality of finish is very good indeed. It would be churlish to complain about the lack of real wood veneers at this level, especially when the little Epics look so classy.

There's a bass-tuning port to the rear, plus biwireable terminals, and – well, that's about it: these are very simple, no-nonsense speakers, with 88dB/W/m sensitivity and 4ohm nominal impedance, neither of which should present too many problems to modern amplifiers. Epos suggests 20W as a minimum power requirement, with 100W as maximum.

PERFORMANCE

In use, the Epic 1s deliver, in the manner of Epos speakers of the past. There's that punchy, dynamic sound many used to love in



the company's classic designs, provided you use these little boxes with an amplifier able to make the most of them. I'd suggest something in the Yamaha A-S500 class as a minimum, but they'll respond well to an even greater expenditure on the electronics.

They don't have huge bass, preferring instead to stay within their limits and keep things tight and controlled, but in a small- to medium-sized room they do a fine job of conveying a very real sense of orchestral scale and dynamics, while treating voices and solo instruments even-handedly.

They prefer to be run at a decent level if they're to deliver their most open sound – but then that's true of all small speakers – and they only start to harden up if you push them to the kind of levels at which most of us wouldn't want to listen for too long. Again, that's typical of speakers of this size.

Yes, you could get a shade more detail by doubling your budget, but personally I'd rather have the sweet, smooth treble of the Epics than something more willingly provoked into spit or a metallic edge. And for all that sweetness, there's no shortage of "air" in the sound these speakers deliver.

To sum up, then, these are really rather clever little speakers, both firmly in the Epos tradition and yet absolutely up to date in terms of convenience and flexibility. I think the company may have a winner on its hands with this range if they're all as good as this.

EPOS EPIC1

Type Bookshelf/standmount speakers

Price £325/pr

Drive units 25mm soft-dome tweeter, 15cm polypropylene-cone mid/bass

Frequency response 51Hz-25kHz

Amplifier power handling 20W(min)-100W

Sensitivity 88dB/2.83V/1m

Nominal impedance 4ohm

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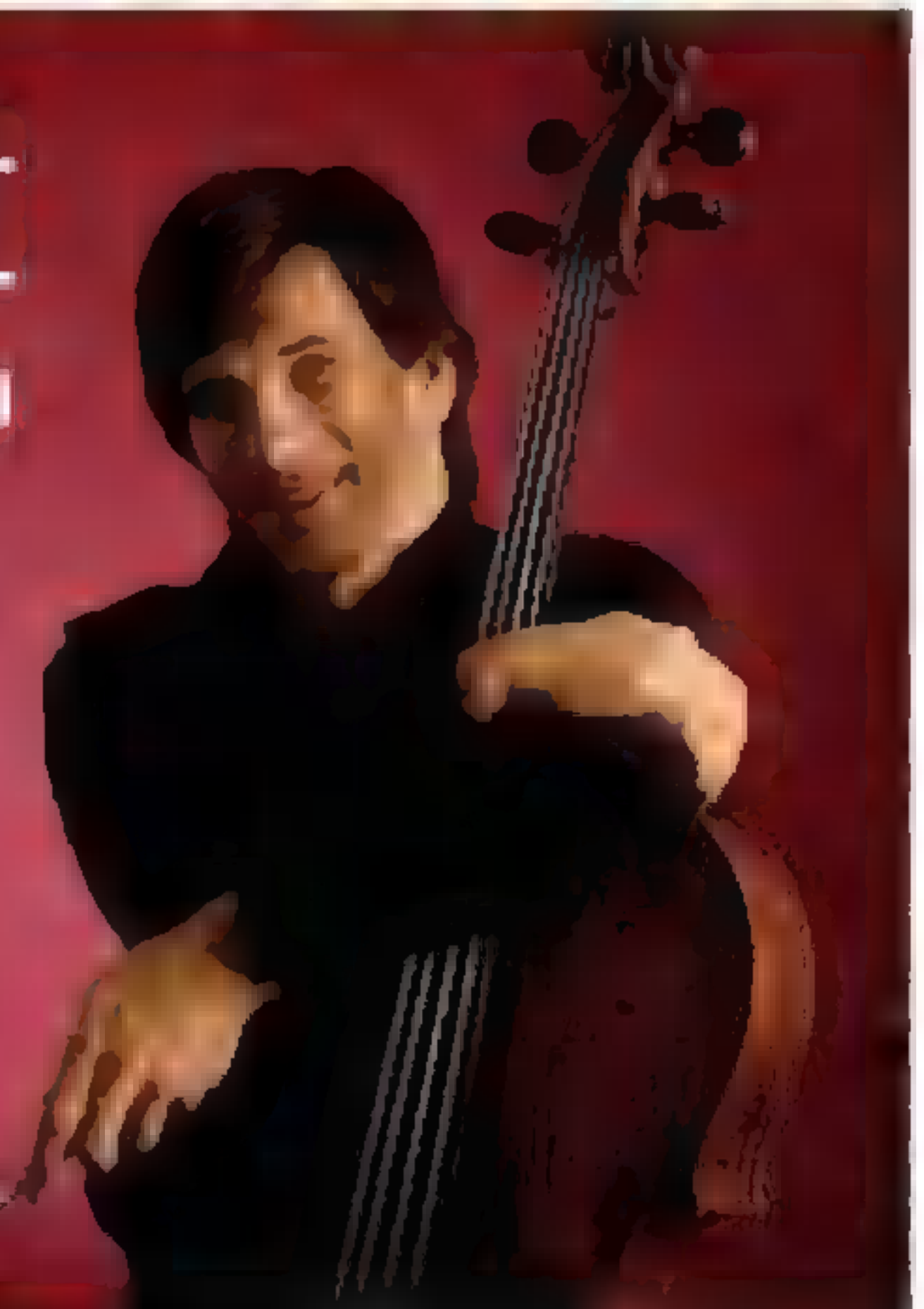
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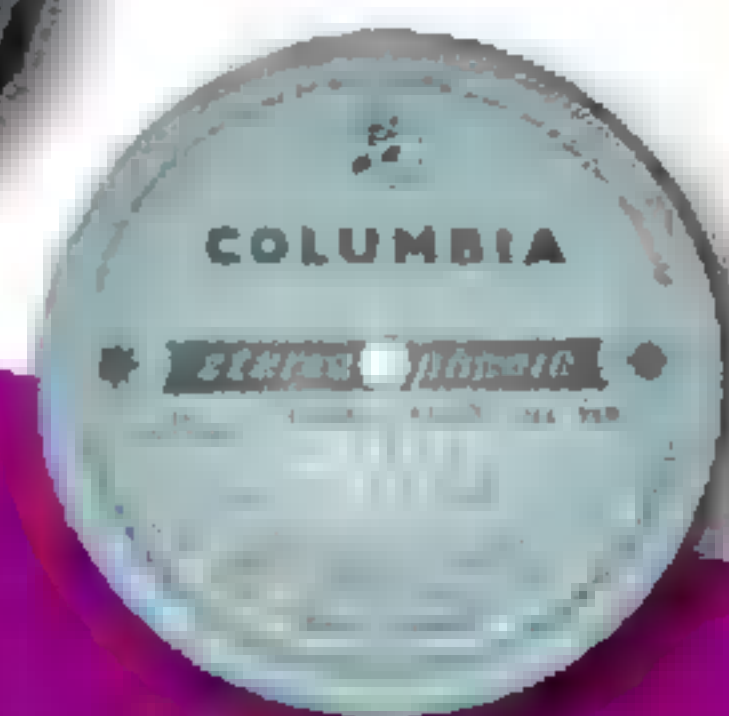


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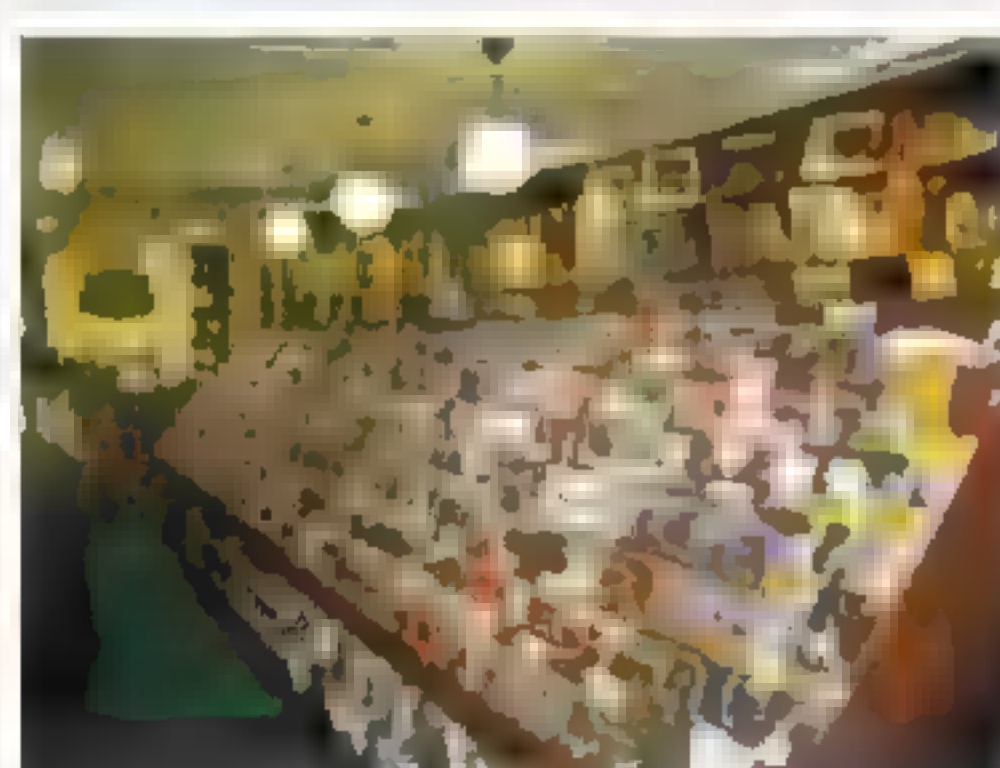
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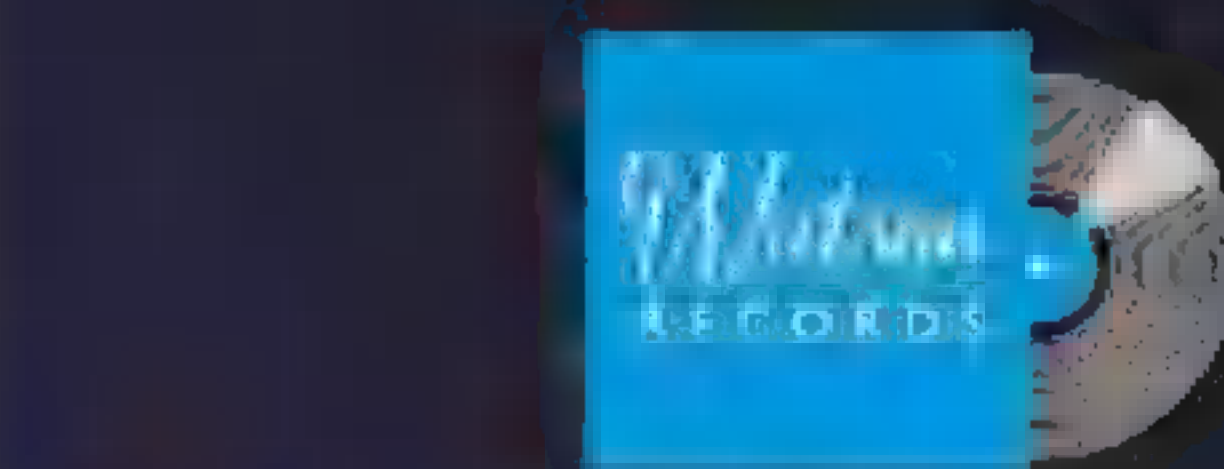
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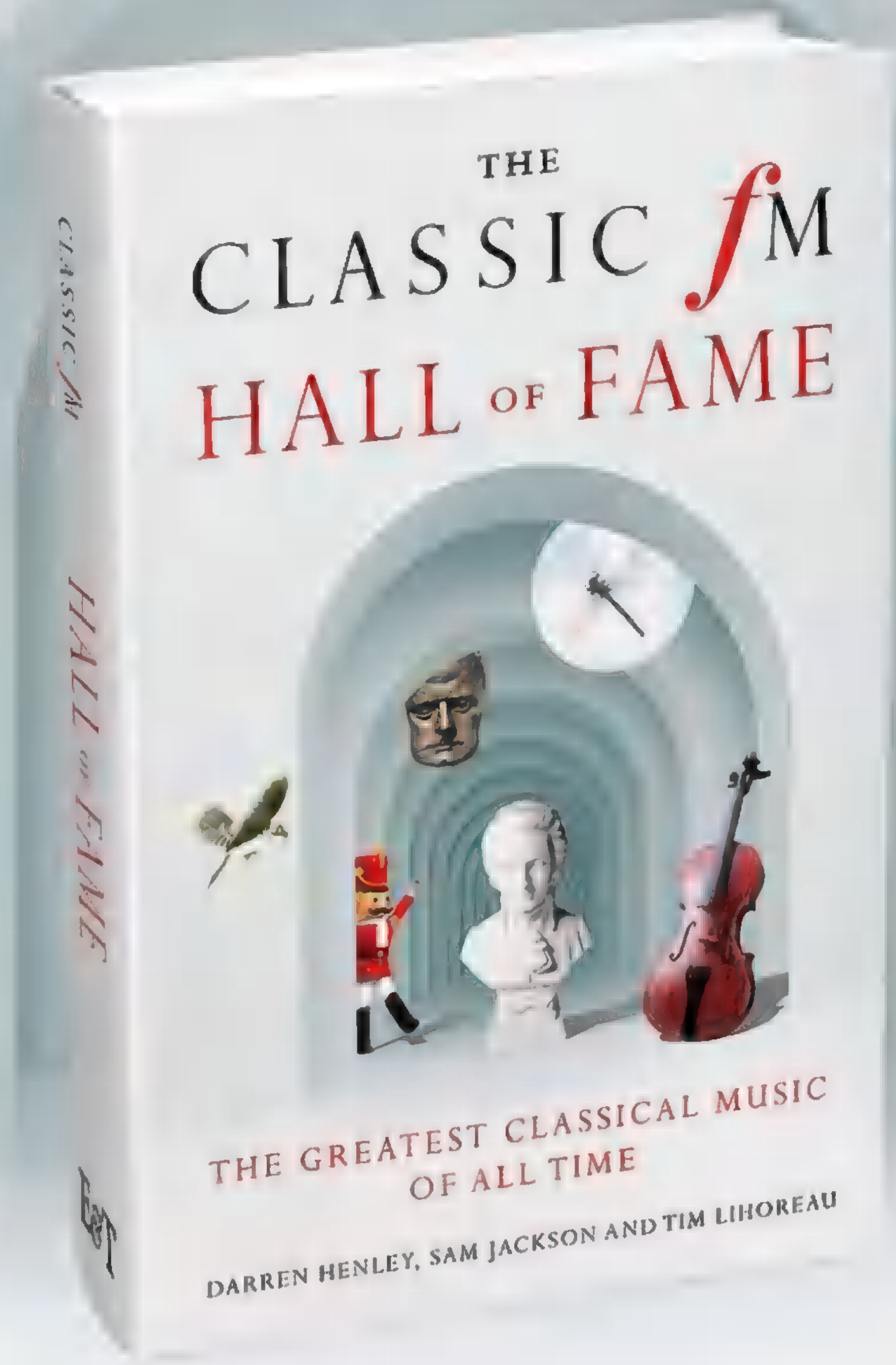
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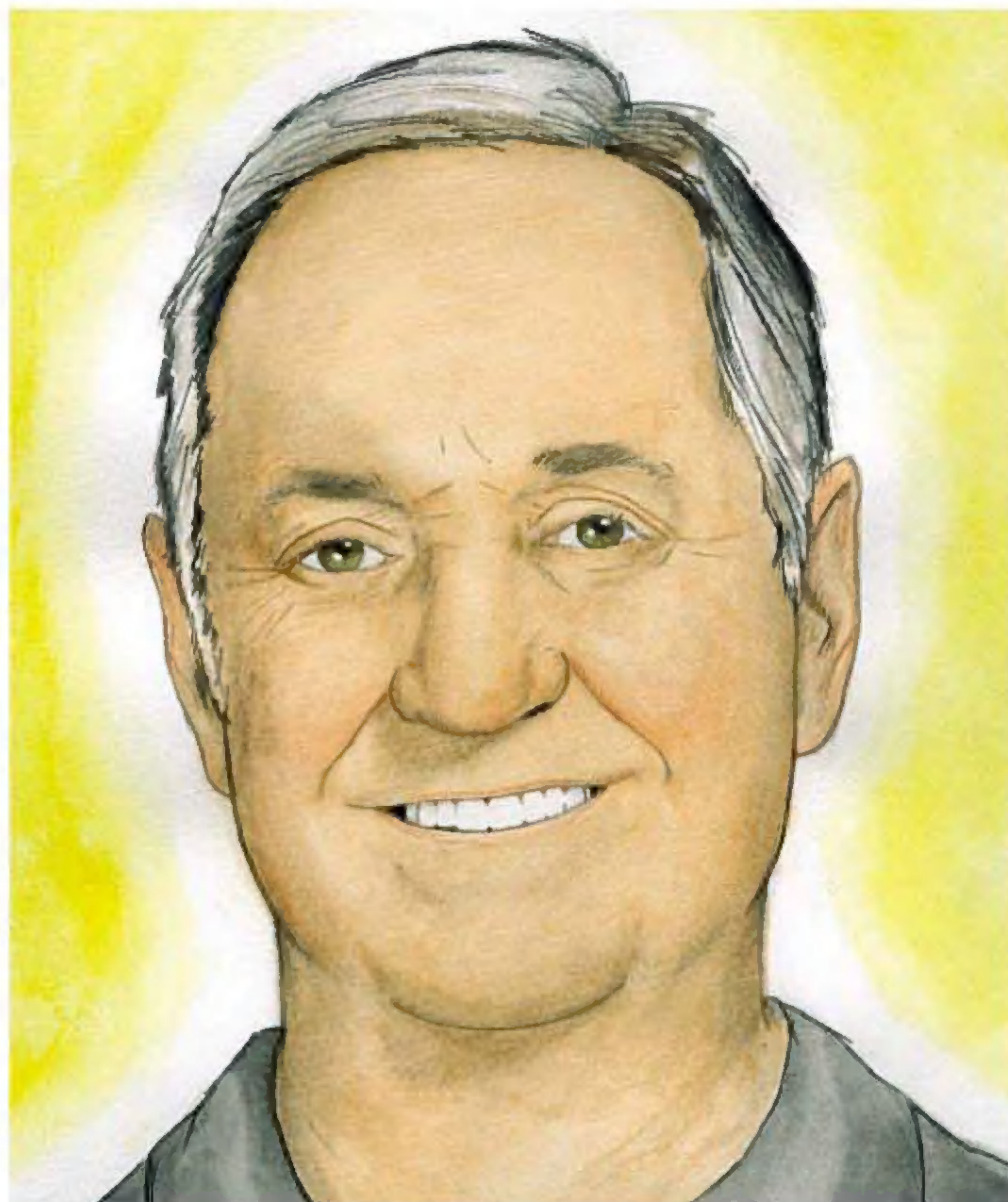
My Music

Neil Sedaka, the singer, songwriter and pianist,
on his classical music past – and future

For years I had every intention of having a career as a classical concert pianist. I attended the Juilliard Preparatory School in New York and then two years at the college level, studying with great teachers including Adele Marcus and Rosina Lhévinne. It was quite a 360-degree turn when I discovered that I could write songs and sing.

It is wonderful to play the Beethoven *Waldstein* Sonata but, I realised, more wonderful still to stand up and sing your own compositions. But the great love of classical music has never left me and I still play with chamber groups in my home – piano quintets, works by Brahms, Dvořák, Mendelssohn, I still love to play all of these. Not too many people know that about me. It's a good time for me to look back on all of this because coincidentally I have recently composed my first piano concerto and my first symphony. I recorded them with the London Philharmonic Orchestra recently at Air Studios and we're waiting for a debut for the concerto to be arranged either in London or in New York. The symphony had its premiere at the Sydney Opera House, the concerto is called *Manhattan Intermezzo*, named after the place I come from.

Competitions were never comfortable for me, although when I was 16 the New York classical music radio station WQXR had a contest for the best high-school pianist which I won (the judge was Arthur Rubinstein, no less). In the 1960s I was accepted to play in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. I had sent in a tape and they liked it, but then the Russians discovered



‘The Russians discovered I was a rock’n’roller and I was disqualified!’

that I was a capitalist rock’n’roller from America and I was disqualified! I was enormously relieved. Every time I had to get up and play in competitions I would get so nervous, I could never relax with it.

In some ways it is very strange that I became a performer at all. An aunt of mine was very pushy and had me audition for

children’s TV shows in the 1950s and I would get to the final and be beaten out by another child and it was always a relief, as with the Tchaikovsky Competition.

It is wonderful spiritually to play the great masters, but the fact that my songs come from my soul and I’m singing my own thoughts and my own melodies makes a difference. As does the

fact that it’s not about re-interpretation, as playing, say, Prokofiev is. So that also helps with the nerves. I might also say that I had many cover records of my pop songs by some of the great singers, from Elvis to Sinatra, and they had to compete with my interpretation! Of course there’s no basis of comparison to the masters, but still...

I’ve never studied voice but have a great love for vocal music. Once I got to say “hello” to Pavarotti when we were both performing during the same week in Hawaii. We chatted on the beach and I wished him luck for his concert and said that I was sure that it would go well. He said, nervously: “Well, the voice is very vulnerable, you never know with a voice!” And that’s true. There are so many things that can affect the voice, there are muscles you use, there are the nerves to consider, there is the projection, the continuity, the drama – you don’t have those factors in your study at home. So you never know what will happen until you get up there. The adrenaline always helps; if you have a cold it even helps you sing through it.

I listen to recordings of different kinds of music. My taste is eclectic, from serious music to jazz to pop to blues. That’s one of the reasons I’ve been around so long. I try never to repeat myself, but to develop and grow. I’ve changed styles, gotten out of my comfortable sphere, tried new things and so never been bored. And my classical training, the discipline and perfectionism that goes with that, has always been there as a great strength in my own writing and performing. ●
Neil Sedaka performed at the opening of the new Center for the Performing Arts, Carmel, Indiana



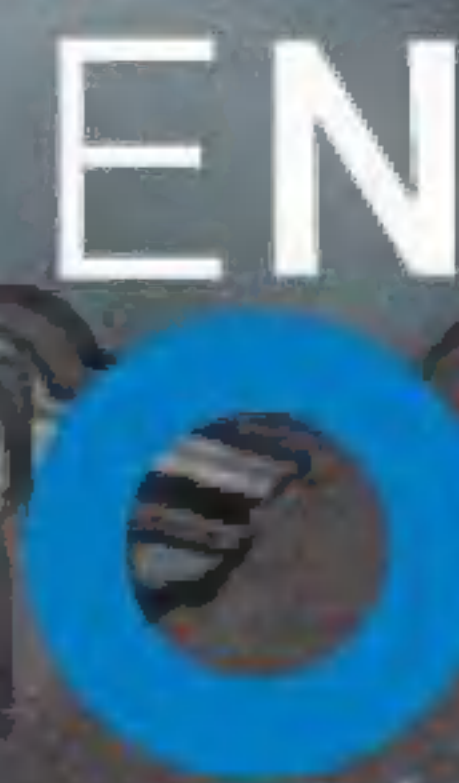
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- Delete tracks you don't like
- Seven rainbow colour coded playlists
- Segue function blends one track into the next
- One touch record from vinyl, cassette or radio
- One button plays the entire music collection at random
- Plays MP3 downloads - future proof
- Clock with alarm
- 60 Watt, 4.8 x 16 x 22 cm steel and aluminium construction
- Backup music to external USB hard disk for safe keeping
- You can use it with your existing hi-fi or on its own

Over 10,000 sold. Lots of happy customers.

Until you actually own a Brennan or at least see one operating, you can't really put into words how wonderful and amazing it is. You wonder how something so small, compact and stylish can do so much! Now, with the touch of a button on the Brennan, it randomly plays music and I no longer have to make such decisions by myself. It makes them for me." Mr G. Patterson, N. Ireland

Money back guarantee

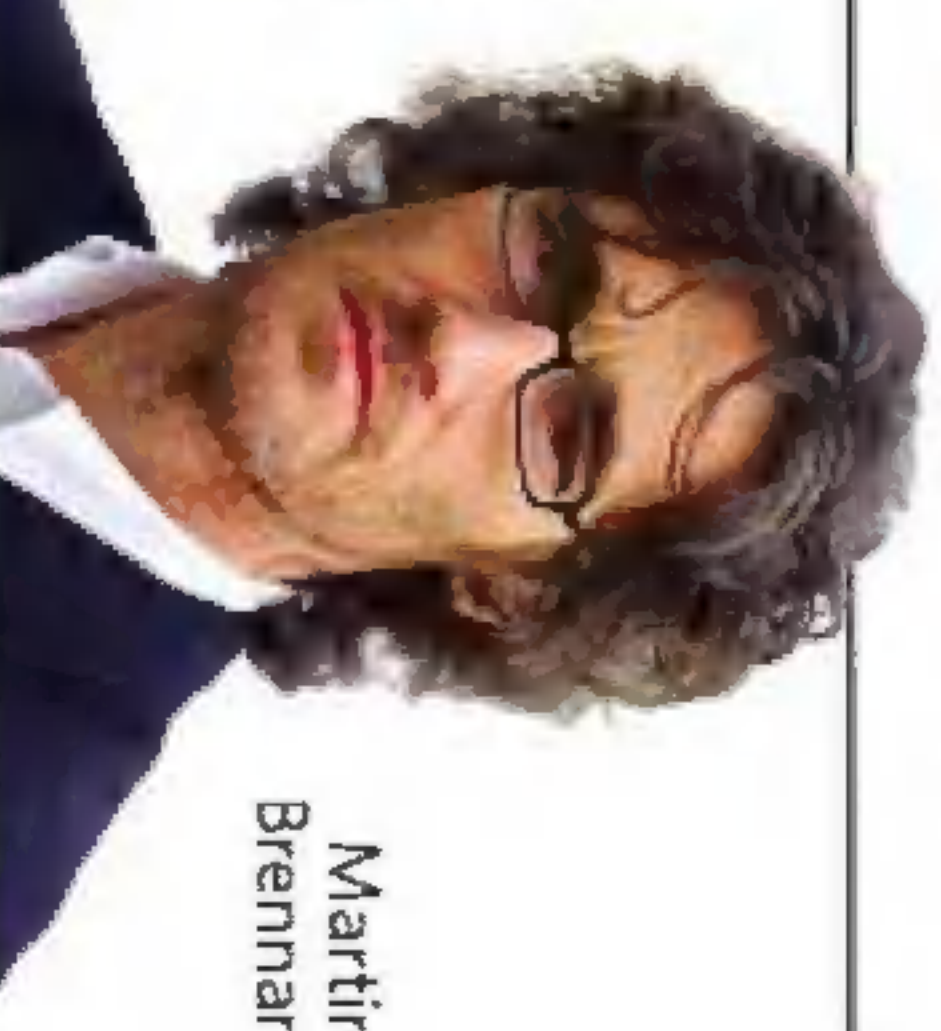
If you're not suitably impressed with your Brennan JB7 we'll collect it free of charge and refund you in full.

The face behind Brennan

Martin is a physicist, computer engineer and silicon chip designer. He co-designed the world's first 64-bit games computer. "I always liked the promise of CDs. It wasn't so much the quality but the quick access to a given track. After vinyl and cassette that was a real plus. My first CD player was a five CD multi-changer. I liked the idea of quick access to more than one CD and music that didn't repeat after 40 minutes. A few years ago I had a go at loading my music onto a computer - but I never listened to it - I needed something simpler, more immediate. In the end the computer got a virus and the music files were lost - I still had the originals thankfully. The JB7 is really my personal ideal music player."



The Brennan JB7 is available in Cobalt Blue or Titanium Metallic



Martin Brennan

To get the whole story on the Brennan JB7 and order visit www.brennan.co.uk

brennan

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